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of Heaven
What it is
How we
Enter it.

Walpole

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THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

WHAT IT IS

AND

HOW WE ENTER IT

BY THE REV.

G. H. S. WALPOLE, D.D.

RECTOR OF LAMBETH
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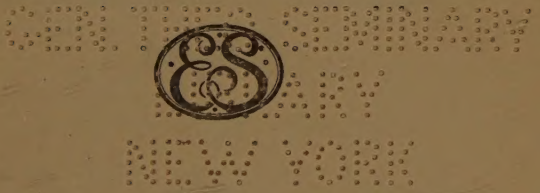

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THE BISHOP PADDOCK LECTURES

In the summer of the year 1880, George A. Jarvis, of Brooklyn, N.Y., moved by his sense of the great good which might thereby accrue to the cause of Christ, and to the Church of which he was an ever-grateful member, gave to the General Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church certain securities, exceeding in value eleven thousand dollars, for the foundation and maintenance of a Lectureship in said seminary.

Out of love to a former pastor and enduring friend, the Right Rev. Benjamin Henry Paddock, D.D., Bishop of Massachusetts, he named the foundation "The Bishop Paddock Lectureship."

The deed of trust declares that—

"*The subjects* of the lectures shall be such as appertain to the defence of the religion of Jesus Christ, as revealed in the *Holy Bible*, and illustrated in the *Book of Common Prayer*, against the varying errors of the day, whether materialistic, rationalistic, or professedly religious, and also to its defence and confirmation in respect of such central truths as the *Trinity*, the *Atonement*, *Justification*, and the *Inspiration of the Word of God*; and of such central facts as the *Church's Divine Order and Sacraments*, her historical *Reformation*, and her rights and powers as a pure and national Church. *And* other subjects may be chosen if unanimously approved by the Board of Appointment as being both timely and also within the true intent of this Lectureship."

Under the appointment of the Board created by the Trust, the Reverend G. H. S. Walpole, D.D., Rector of Lambeth, delivered the Lectures for the year 1908–9, contained in this volume.

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INTRODUCTION

MAETERLINCK in his latest play, *The Blue Bird*, tells us of a boy who was given by an old fairy a green hat with a diamond ornament, and the power of the diamond was such that wherever it turned, the soul of things was made visible. "All the inanimate things as well as the animals became articulate. The dog, faithful, humorous, and intimate; the cat, malicious, satirical, and traitorous; water, a weeping young girl; fire, springing from the hearth in red and yellow lights; milk, characteristically timid; sugar, a little too sweet; and light, an inquisitive image." It sets us wondering whether such playful fancy is only fancy, whether we are always to remain deaf and blind to the very heart of what we see and hear; whether the trees and stones and babbling brooks, the sea, the

mountains, and the clouds are always to remain appearances of something never disclosed.

Once, indeed, there was a time when men believed that spirits, angels, and demons worked behind these outward phenomena, that everything was alive and articulate, though only the wise could discover what was said. But these are said to be the Dark Ages of superstition which we have left behind. And doubtless there was much superstition. The association of special places or things with movements of the spiritual world naturally led to a belief that places and objects influenced people apart from moral dispositions. A sacred well, the bones of a dead saint, the incantations of witches or necromancers were supposed to have particular effects, whether God willed or not. And persuasions that things were going to happen sometimes coincided with the events and gave credence to many foolish stories. But because the Middle Ages were characterised by foolish fancies and ignorant fears, there is no occasion for dismissing the whole subject of the spirit world as unworthy of intelligent study. It is true that credulity is not faith and superstition is not religion,

but we ought to be careful in using these words that we understand their right meaning. The credulous are those who accept what they hear without staying to think whether it is reasonable; and the superstitious are those who believe that places or things exert an influence independently of the law which ties effect to causes. If, for example, I refuse to sail on a Friday, because it is an unlucky day, or to help my neighbour to salt from fear of doing him harm, I am superstitious, *i.e.* I believe in the possibility of things happening without adequate reason. But if I believe that in answer to the prayer of faith, God intervenes in my behalf, either by showing me which of two courses I ought to pursue, or by sending me some help, there is nothing unreasonable; nor is it less reasonable, if I believe that between me and Him there is some intermediary which He chooses to use to effect His purposes for me. Once accept as a fact that God uses visible ministers for the fulfilment of His designs, and there is no further difficulty from the point of view of reason why He should not use unseen spirits of which the world must be full. It is a poor conception of the

universe which supposes that in its infinite realms there are no living creations except those which are found on our small planet. And we place strange limitations on God's power and wisdom, when we imagine, as some would do, that if such beings exist, they must necessarily be all like human beings. Rather are we led by revelation to think that in the spirit world there may be the widest possible differences, as wide as that which exists between the limpet and the most perfect man, the likeness consisting only in this, that they are children of the same Father, and have such interest in our lives, as the elder sons and daughters have in those adopted into the same family.

Those who have taken a large view of human society have always felt that in its destiny other beings have taken the profoundest interest. Goethe's *Faust*, and Shakespeare's *Midsummer Nights' Dream*, *Tempest*, and *Macbeth* are good examples of this. Some will say that Shakespeare's "supernaturalism was in keeping with the belief, fashion, and tastes of his day, and with the traditions and prevailing methods of the stage; that

the mind of man was then still enthralled by necromancy, and that this enduring heritage of savage life displayed itself in both the beliefs and the fashions of the time"[1]; but it is worth noting, as Mr. Findlay admits, that this employment of the supernatural to symbolise a deeper or a hidden meaning in the plays increased with the growth of Shakespeare's genius. The *Tempest*, in which it is most fully used, was written, it is supposed, at the end of twenty-three years of struggle, almost at the close of his career. And it is worth noting that the year 1611, which is not far from the date of the play, is the date of the Authorised Version of the Bible. Shakespeare was certainly susceptible to the movements of his time, and it is difficult to suppose that when a broader and more spiritual view of human life was beginning to be taken that he should be lending his powerful aid to superstition. Is it not rather probable that coming under the quickening spiritual impulse of his own time, he was led to see wider and deeper, and so to be able to introduce to his contemporaries a world that contained an Ariel as well as a Caliban. There

[1] *Humbug and Homilies*, J. C. Findlay, pp. 271, 272.

is here no encouragement of dark, ignorant superstition, but a restoration to those who were beginning a revolt against it, of a larger life. Shakespeare's *Tempest* world is, in its wide inclusiveness, more like that of the Bible than anything that literature had produced since Dante's *Divina Commedia*, save Spenser's *Faëry Queene*. And the impulse he gave received fresh force with Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It was the dead deistical conceptions of the eighteenth century that again narrowed men's visions, and is largely responsible for the Sadducean distaste for a living spiritual kingdom which prevails so widely to-day.

But there are already signs that the abstract idealism which makes existence only a set of relationships within the Absolute, does not content those who are watching the progress of philosophical thought. Professor James of Harvard, in his recent lectures at Oxford, pleaded for what he calls a pluralistic universe. He complains that the arguments advanced for transcendental idealism have been "strangely thin." "It's terms," he writes, "have left us shiveringly thin

wrappings for so thick and burly a world as this. . . . From Green to Haldane, the Absolute proposed to us to straighten out the confusion of the thicket of experience in which our life is passed, remains a pure abstraction which hardly any one tries to make a whit concreter. If we open Green we get nothing but the transcendental ego of apperception blown up into a sort of timeless soap-bubble large enough to mirror the whole universe. . . . If we take the Cairds they tell us little more of the principle of the universe. . . . It is always a return into the identity of self from the difference of its objects. . . . This seems the very quintessence of thinness."[1] That is his criticism; and to what does he look for the fulness—that "thicker" element in philosophical teaching which he so much desires? To a revival of the teaching of Fechner. Fechner, he says, has vision, a gift that most professional philosophers are without, and that is why he can read him over and over again and always with a fresh sense of reality.

Now according to Fechner, I quote from Professor James, "the original sin of both our

[1] *A Pluralistic Universe*, William James, p. 136.

popular and scientific thinking is our inveterate habit of regarding the spiritual not as the rule, but as an exception in the midst of Nature. Instead of believing our life to be fed at the breasts of the greater life, our individuality to be sustained by the greater individuality, which must have more consciousness and more independence than all it brings forth, we habitually treat what lies outside of our life as so much slag and ashes of life only; or, if we believe in a divine Spirit we fancy Him on the one side as bodiless, and Nature as soulless on the other. What comfort or peace, asks Fechner, can come from such a doctrine? The flowers wither at its breath, the stars turn into stone; our own body grows unworthy of our spirit and sinks to a tenement for carnal senses only. The book of Nature turns into a volume on mechanics, in which whatever has life is treated as an anomaly; a great chasm yawns between us and all that is higher than ourselves, and God becomes a thin nest of abstractions."[1] Who does not sympathise with this criticism as he has listened to some wise man who has succeeded

[1] *Ibid.* p. 150.

by a series of abstractions in thinning out the universe to some pale ghost without life or reality? But what has Fechner to offer? To some his "thickening" process will seem to be grotesque. In his view the universe is not one consciousness only, but a consciousness including an infinite variety of consciousnesses, as a large Chinese puzzle egg contains a series of ever smaller and smaller eggs. This is how Professor James describes his philosophy: "Though speculatively a Monist in his theology, yet there is room in his universe for every grade of spiritual being between man and man and the final all-inclusive God." If you ask what the positive content of all this superhumanity may be, he suggests the sun, the stars, the earth, and also the infinitely small as well as the infinitely large. He treats the earth as our special human guardian angel; we can pray to it as men pray to their saints. But not only has the entire earth its own collective consciousness, but so must each sun, moon, planet, so must the whole solar system have its own wider consciousness in which the consciousness of our earth plays one part. So has the entire

starry system as such its own consciousness, and if that starry system be not the sum of all that is materially considered, then that whole system, along with whatever else may be, is the body of that absolutely totalised consciousness of the universe to which men give the name of God. But not only the material but the spiritual also. "Every element has its own living denizens. Can the celestial ocean of ether, whose waves are light, in which the earth herself floats, not have hers, higher by so much as their element is higher, swimming with fins, flying without wings, moving immense and tranquil, as by a half-spiritual force through the half-spiritual sea which they inhabit, rejoicing in the exchange of luminous influence with one another, following the slightest pull of one another's attraction, and harbouring, each of them, an inexhaustible inward wealth. . . . Here are actually existent beings, dwelling in the light, and moving through the sky, needing neither food nor drink, intermediaries between God and us, obeying His commands."[1]

Some readers who lack the power of vision

[1] *A Pluralistic Universe*, William James, p. 163.

which Professor James considers to be Fechner's special gift, will look upon this, as I have said, as fantastic and grotesque. Of its philosophical value I am no judge, but as a conception of the universe it seems to be infinitely preferable to that which makes God all and all God, or that which sets God against man and man against God with nothing between. I should not, however, have quoted at such great length had it not appeared to me that whatever may be the worth of its particular speculations, it does good service to the doctrines of the Christian faith by emphasising the dissatisfaction that is being felt by those who would confine our interests to the narrow sphere of the visible, and limit God's creations to one spot in the universe.

Archbishop Benson, preaching years ago at some great church gathering, began with the words, "God, Christ, and our own souls," as summing up the spiritual content of the faith in which so many had been brought up. Something had been wanting, and this was the Church. Without it religious interest had been very limited, and the power for social service lamentably weakened. We are all aware how

much the restoration of the Church idea has brought, how it has enriched and empowered the individuality which evangelical thought had awakened to religious consciousness. But since the days of the Oxford movement, human thought has moved on very rapidly. Possibilities then unthought of have become realities. The telephone, the gramophone, wireless telegraphy have opened out connecting links in space, making the distant and far close and intimate; whilst the discovery of radium and the Röntgen rays have, the one by its healing properties, the other by its power to reveal the invisible, etherealised the things we see and touch. It might have been thought that such revelations of the spiritual side of the physical world would have brought the unseen kingdom nearer, but, on the contrary, the pride of humanity in its own achievements has led it to feel that divine revelation cannot give it what it cannot obtain by its own unaided powers. As then some sixty years ago the doctrine of the Church was needed to broaden man's individuality, that he might be taught to reach out to the great social needs that were being awakened, so now the doctrine of the

Kingdom of Heaven needs to be re-emphasised that man may find a place in his religious thinking for the wider knowledge that is every day being given.

This may be some excuse for the subject of the lectures that follow. It seems to me that we may be led to take a more hopeful view of the world as well as a more modest estimate of our own powers, if we believe that all our endeavours after righteousness and truth are being aided by this vast spiritual kingdom which presses on every part of human society as closely as the atmosphere presses on the earth in which we live, and that our efforts are liberating forces, or perhaps it might be more true to say, space-creating energies, into which the powers of the kingdom may enter and move and effect their great designs.

We speak naturally of the help God gives us both in the inventions of science and the discovery of new powers of healing; we thank Him for the grace that enables us to conquer evil and for the progress in every direction that humanity is making. And we are learning to connect all these blessings with the Incarnation, or still better with the Incarnate Son of God

through whom all good has come. But here many stay. They are content with leaving the question of means by which help is given as undetermined or full of danger. They say, "We prefer that God directly and not mediately helps," and if we urge the text, "No man cometh to the Father but by Me," they say they are prepared to accept Christ as Mediator, but they admit none other; but if you ask, "Has not Christ helped you through a book or a minister?" they are constrained to admit it, but say that such mediation is of Christ's own ordering, which was never disputed. We then ask, Is God's ministry confined to human beings? How was St. Peter delivered out of the prison in which he was confined? How was it St. Philip learned that it was his duty to leave Samaria immediately after the apostolic laying on of hands? How did Cornelius know where to find some one to help him in his spiritual difficulties? How was it that St. Paul felt certain when the tempest threatened the total loss of the ship that all would be well? What does the Bible say? That in no one of these cases was help given directly, but through a being of the spiritual

kingdom. And to those who ask why help should be given through that source, may it not be that the fellowship which ministry always fosters is needed not only in the small family of the human race, but in that larger family of heaven and earth. We value the friendships which we have been able to form with the lower world, *e.g.* with a favourite horse, dog, or cat. We hope they may continue elsewhere. Life is the richer for them. So it may be, and no doubt will be, that the larger life beyond the grave will be the warmer and more enjoyable through that fellowship with the angels which their ministry has made so effective.

But, independently of purely subjective reasons, a time has come, I think, when the question of the Kingdom of Heaven should again be re-examined. In his Bampton Lectures on the *Regnum Dei*, the Bishop of Exeter, to the regret of many, was only able to devote the closing Lecture to a consideration of the place the Kingdom of God occupies in modern thought, work, and life. It was impossible for him to do anything more than indicate the relation of the ideal kingdom to the Church

on the one hand, and Socialism on the other. The historical aspect of the subject necessarily prevented a complete working out of the thought of its present-day meaning. It is this that I hope may yet be done. These lectures are only suggestions of possible lines. They are strongly objective, that is, they start with the belief that the Kingdom of Heaven is a Kingdom of Heaven, and not simply of earth, that though it existed before the world was, yet its association with the world has been of the closest, first through Israel, the theocracy established there giving peculiar facilities for its working, then through Christ its King, whose advent brought it into still closer relationship with the earth, then through the Church which Christ created as His Agent or Instrument.

It was inevitable in such a study that its relation to nature on the one hand, and human society on the other, should be considered, though I felt that both subjects were beyond my powers of dealing at all adequately with them. If, however, the main trend of the argument is sound, then it may be hoped that that some of the suggestions thrown out may

be pursued still further by those who have the necessary ability for the task. In my preparation I have been greatly helped by the Bishop of Exeter's *Regnum Dei*, though I cannot claim his support for the particular view advocated here, by Dr. Bushnell's *Nature and the Supernatural*, Messrs. Thomson and Tait in *The Unseen Universe*, Professor Shairp's *Poetic Interpretation of Nature*, Professor Peabody's *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, and many other books, my indebtedness to which I hope I have acknowledged in the lectures. That God, Eternal Beauty and Wisdom, created the universe, necessarily implies that order is Heaven's first law. The expression of this order in a kingdom naturally follows. That we do not see it with our eyes is no argument against its existence. The question these lectures seek to answer is what teaching does Revelation give about it. It tells us much about angels; does it tell us anything about the realm which they inhabit? No one can say that the positive teaching about the Kingdom of Heaven, which is now current, is satisfactory. With some it is purely eschatological, referring simply to the apocalyptic

consummation of Messiah's rule; with others it is a dream of a social ideal towards which mankind is tending; with others it is the Church; with others it is a concrete form of spiritual doctrine. The difficulty to be faced is how to reconcile the present and future aspects of it which Christ always teaches. How can it be present and future at the same time? How can it be heavenly and earthly at the same time? How can it be the Church and yet something wider than the Church? The answer suggested in these lectures is that suggested by George Herbert's words, inscribed on the walls of the magnificent Congress Library in Washington, U.S.A., "Man is a world, and hath another to attend him."

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

CHAPTER I

THE CHARACTER OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

I

IT is impossible for one who once had the distinction of being a member of the Faculty of this Seminary to begin this course of lectures in any merely formal way. My mind naturally goes back just twenty years next October, when, though a complete stranger, not only to the Seminary, but to America, I received the warmest of welcomes from the Dean and the Faculty, and found my difficult task made comparatively easy by the kind responsiveness of the students to whom I

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lectured. It was, therefore, with peculiar gratification that I received your Dean's invitation to renew the happy and close relations I then held, by giving the Paddock Lectures. And I must confess that it was this opportunity which I feared to miss, rather than any sense of ability to follow in the steps of the eminent men who have made this lectureship known far beyond the confines of this country, that led me to attempt the formidable task that lies before me. It was formidable in itself, formidable also because the care of ten thousand poor gave such scant time for thoughtful preparation. The pressure of city life has, however, this great advantage, that it prevents the lectures from being too academic. Most of those to whom I am speaking will go forth from this beautiful chapel into the midst of a busy, rushing life, to shape it for God. The fact that the lecturer comes straight out of it, places him alongside of them and promotes mutual sympathy.

The choice of a subject is never easy, but it is less easy for one who knows the large variety of subjects which are continually lectured upon here, and knows, too, the

thoroughness with which they are treated. In choosing the subject of the Kingdom of Heaven I was actuated by three motives.

In the first place, it is a subject which at this time is demanding and obtaining considerable attention. On the one hand, scholars are seeking to find some definition other than that of the Church, which is felt to be too narrow; and on the other, those interested in social reform are convinced that this definition must be practical, not something up in the clouds, or merely a state in which people will be after death, but a righteous society established upon earth. The subject needs reconsideration.

In the second place, the very phrase, and, as I think, the truth that underlies it, suggests thoughts which supply the very best antidote to the materialism of the age in which we live. This present world with its eating and drinking, its machinery and inventive ability, its luxury and ever-increasing refinements, has a natural tendency to ignore that entire range of things which we call spiritual. The world of the Psalms, the Gospels, and the Apocalypse seems unreal and fanciful to one whose needs

seem to be supplied by what the world offers.

In the third place, the thought of the Kingdom of Heaven offers the highest possible encouragement to those who are fighting what sometimes appears to be a losing battle against religious indifference and unbelief. When the believer realises that he is only in the skirmishing line of a well-disciplined enthusiastic host of innumerable intelligent beings who are always advancing and always winning, when he realises, as the servant of Elisha did, that those who are with him are infinitely more than those opposing, he can fight on in hope, being sure that every step he takes will be made good.

The subject, therefore, is of the highest practical importance; and any study, however inadequate, that may lead to further discussion, will not be unworthy of a place amongst the distinguished list of subjects that have been treated under the name of the munificent founder of this lectureship, nor unsuitable to those who have still to take up the earliest gospel message that "the Kingdom of Heaven" is at hand.

This is not the place where the fruits of

ripest scholarship can be, or are likely to be, disregarded; nor is it the place where those who are being trained to meet in the West, as well as in the East, a social doctrine that has no other basis than the supposed regenerative powers of Humanity, can be indifferent to its purport.

When it is said that the Baptist and Christ are the foremost amongst the social leaders of the world; that they both made the same proclamation that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, and both anticipated such a change in the condition of human society that extortion, exaction, and injustice would be no more; that the man with two coats or food would share with those who had none; that violence would no more be heard in the land, and all be content with their wages—we are met with a statement which, though in the main true, is yet misleading.

According to this conception, Christ was nothing more than a great social reformer nourishing within His soul the ideal of a common life so radically different from the present that it involved a reversal of values, a revolutionary displacement of existing relations.

In this sense, there was a revolutionary consciousness in Jesus expressed in the Beatitudes and other teachings. He, so it is said, attacked the authorities of His day with true revolutionary boldness and thoroughness. His ideal involved the abolition of rank and the extinction of those badges of rank in which former inequality was incrusted. The Kingdom of Heaven was to be a reversal of the kingdom of earth, and it is towards this end all things are working to-day.

II

I am not stating this here with a view to inquiring where the misconception arises—that I hope to discuss in another lecture—but rather with the view of showing that what has happened before has happened again; and that is, that men have interpreted the words the "Kingdom of Heaven" according to the leading tendency of the times in which they lived, rather than by a study of the teaching given by our Lord.

It was natural, when the Jewish kingdom was under the heel of Rome, that the ex-

pectation of the best, as well as of the worst, should be for a restoration of the old, and a great deal more than the old, power to Israel.

"They expected to see once more a warrior king, judging in the gate of Jerusalem, or surrounded by his mighty men, or carrying his victorious arms into the neighbouring countries, or receiving submissive embassies from Rome and Seleucia, and in the meantime holding awful communication with Jehovah, administering His law and singing His praise." It was natural enough, as Professor Seeley says, that such vague fancies should fill the minds of ordinary men.[1]

Again, when with the destruction of Jerusalem this hope passed away, it was equally natural that the Christians of those earliest days, who looked for the immediate return of Christ to reign for a thousand years with His saints on the earth, should interpret the Kingdom of Heaven as meaning the Millennium. As the Bishop of Exeter shows in his Bampton Lectures, this realistic conception of the Kingdom of Heaven was not simply due to what

[1] *Ecce Homo*, p. 25.

is now generally regarded as a misinterpretation of that vision of the reign of the saints which St. John gives in the Apocalypse, but perhaps chiefly to the fact that nearly every Christian Church had originally formed round a nucleus of Christian Jews or proselytes, and that the thinking of the Church was largely affected by Jewish eschatology, with its marked tendency to clothe spiritual truths in concrete and tangible form.[1]

When this hope passed away, as it was bound to do when the Advent of Christ was delayed, another interpretation was necessary.

And as the fall of Jerusalem had to some extent been responsible for the conception that the Kingdom of Heaven was to be realised by an actual reign of Christ on the earth; so, too, to the fall of Rome in the year 410 was due that interpretation which has held its place for such a long period, namely, that the Kingdom of Heaven is the Church. This has been so widely assumed and taken for granted that it surprises us to learn that "though we cannot say that no one before Augustine in writing

[1] See *Regnum Dei*, Lect. iv., where this conception of the Kingdom of Heaven is fully treated.

or speech spoke of the Catholic Church as the Kingdom of God, the fact remains that extant literature records no instance of such language."[1] No—it was the shock of the capture of the Eternal City by Alaric in Christian times which led men to ask Christian apologists what reply they could give to the thought that this overthrow was due to the anger of the gods at the desertion of their altars.[1] And then it was, that St. Augustine, who had "long been pondering over the problem of human history in the light of the fundamental relations between man and God,"[2] developed in a forcible and striking manner his contrast between the two great kingdoms—that of the world, expressed in Rome; that of heaven, expressed in the Church; the one founded on love of self, the other founded on love of God; the one the Kingdom of the Devil, the other the Kingdom of Christ. It is true he regards the Church as only an imperfect embodiment of the Kingdom of Heaven,—in "its full reality it is reserved for the Eternity when that which is in part shall be done away,"—but though "inchoate

[1] *Regnum Dei*, p. 176. [2] *Ibid.* p. 208.

and imperfect," it is still a true embodiment of the Kingdom of Christ on earth. There is no occasion to point out how this inspiring and stimulating conception affected the after history of the Western Church; it was inevitable that it should develop into a papal absolutism which should demand as its top stone the Infallibility of its spiritual monarch, the Vicar of Christ.

Now it is a disadvantage to all these theories or interpretations that we can see how they arose. Teachers fired with a particular view which was to suit the needs of their time went to the Bible to find authority for it. And there has always been a sufficiency of truth in all the interpretations adopted to enable them to do so.

III

It is the merit of our own age to proceed in a different way. All the passages relating to the subject are carefully examined in the dry light of scholarship, history, and reason, and then conclusions are reached and stated. We might perhaps expect that an interpretation discovered in this way would be abstract rather than concrete, would be vague rather than clear and well

defined, and so it is. The Kingdom of God in every conception that we have hitherto noticed, is a living society consisting of persons bound together by common interests and hopes. It is a concrete, tangible body; a kingdom in the usual acceptation of the word, not in the vague wide meaning applied to the animal, vegetable, or mineral worlds. Whether a political kingdom, or a kingdom of saints, or an ecclesiastical kingdom, the Christian has always looked upon it as a kingdom, and it is that side of it which has been emphasised.

But modern interpretations for the most part are disposed to put this thought second, and to make *βασιλεία* rather refer to the "rule of God" than to His "realm."

So, Dr. Sanday gives, as the best definition he knows, that which is expressed by Dr. Hort in one of his letters: "the world of invisible laws by which God is ruling and blessing His creatures."[1] Dr. Bruce does not greatly differ from this when he describes it further as "the reign of Divine Love exercised by God in His grace over human hearts believing in His love." So, too, the Bishop of Exeter considers

[1] *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, p. 79.

that whilst in its ultimate fulfilment it indicates an *order of things* final and absolute in which God is all in all, the Kingdom of Heaven is in its essential idea the *Reign of God*; those over whom He reigns, and who answer to that by loyal allegiance, constitute a kingdom . . . and this is the ideal towards which the Church must ever be advancing.[1] Cremer also, in his Theological Lexicon, makes it synonymous with salvation, and thinks this rather than a commonweal is its fundamental meaning.

These are high authorities, but it is allowable to think that though preferring the idea of "rule" to that of "kingdom," they would not feel any insuperable difficulty in giving what we may feel to be a fuller and warmer conception if the subject as a whole demanded it. Dr. Sanday admits that these spiritual laws or forces take to themselves an outward form; they are enshrined in a vessel of clay finer or coarser as the case may be, not only in men as individuals but in men as a community or communities;[2] but when we seek to get a clearer knowledge of what this means, we are told that

[1] *Regnum Dei*, p. 76.
[2] *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, p. 84.

it is not the theocracy of the Old Testament, nor the eschatological kingdom of the Apocalypse, nor the Christian Church of to-day, or of the Middle Ages, or of the Fathers. "These are phases through which it passes, but it outgrows one after the other."[1] What, then, is it?

The difficulty in finding an answer is not lessened when we are told "that it was at most stages a society, but at all stages a definite sphere or area into which men might enter."[2]

IV

Now, if we look to the word itself, we are told that the word *βασιλέια* may indicate abstract kingship, royal power and dignity, or it may mean realm or dominion. The phrase, writes Dr. Sanday, covers both senses, but he admits that the latter is more usually adopted by commentators; and if we examine the passages in which it occurs, we shall, I think, see there is good reason for their doing so. When our Lord speaks of our entering the kingdom, inheriting it, seeing it, seeking for it, we think naturally of a realm rather than a rule. When

[1] *Outlines of the Life of Christ*, p. 85. [2] *Ibid.* p. 85.

He declares of one that he is not far from it, and of another that he is less than the least in it; when He asserts that miracles are a sign that it has come upon those who witnessed them; that the violent seek to take it by force—it is difficult to think that He has in His mind an abstract system of laws or principles. When He alludes to it, on the one hand, as being prepared from the foundation of the world, of children belonging to it, of harlots going into it; on the other, as being taken away from one set of people and given to another—we are forced irresistibly to the conclusion that the word has the usual force we ourselves give it when we speak of the kingdom of Britain or the kingdom of Germany.

So much, then, for the word "kingdom." And thus far in the contention for a concrete rather than an abstract meaning, we should judge that the interpretations that have been given were right. The Apostles, the Christians of the first centuries, the Church of the age of Augustine and onwards, the Social Idealists of to-day, had good grounds for believing that kingdom meant kingdom, and not simply rule or government.

V

But the phrase is not confined to one word. It is "the Kingdom of Heaven" or "the Kingdom of God." I do not distinguish between them. Both mean the same, though each has a shade of meaning peculiar to itself. It is true that in current Jewish language "Heaven" was used as a common expression for God, owing to the objection that the Jews had for pronouncing the name of God; but there is no reason to believe our Lord encouraged that feeling. In His own teaching He differentiates between heaven, which is God's throne, and the Eternal who is seated upon it, and it was His practice, a practice followed by His Apostles, to bring the personal conception of God home to His people, rather than to use some vague term instead of it.

The word "heaven," then, more naturally signifies the *sphere* where the realm is situated, as the word "God," the King who governs it.

We are then led to the conclusion that by the Kingdom of Heaven we mean a realm, principality, or dominion in the heavenly sphere,

and it is a Kingdom of God as being that over which God rules.

And this conclusion is confirmed by the historical meaning of the phrase. The Bishop of Exeter has pointed out that though the phrase Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven is not to be found in the Old Testament and belongs to the vocabulary of the New, yet its antecedents and elements are in the Old and its root idea is to be found there. In the Book of Daniel, where we find the thought most clearly expressed, there are two passages which elucidate its meaning. The first is found in the interpretation which Daniel gives of the great image of which Nebuchadnezzar dreamed. The stone cut out of the quarry without hands, which brake in pieces that mighty image, is a kingdom which the God of heaven shall set up, the sovereignty of which shall never pass out of His hands. Here there seems to be a clear distinction between the idea of kingdom and sovereignty, and the word "heaven" has its usual sense.[1]

The other passage gives us the interpretation of a dream which the prophet himself had, and

[1] Dan. ii. 44.

which greatly puzzled and troubled him. In this he saw four great beasts coming up out of the sea: these he understands to be four kings or kingdoms. They pass away, and all the power they have is destroyed. Then an everlasting kingdom, embracing the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, together with dominion, is given to the people of the saints of the Most High through the Son of Man, their King.[1] Here again the addition of the word "dominion" seems to suggest that the word "kingdom" has its ordinary meaning.

Further confirmation is received by the general expectation of the Jews from the time of David to Christ. This always centred in a real kingdom which was to be on earth with Jerusalem as its seat.

There was, we may believe, no expectation anywhere of the advent of a King without a kingdom, of a Messiah who should come alone, and by His own unaided effort found a new kingdom. The kingdom was already in existence, it had been prepared from all eternity, and when the King came would accompany

[1] Dan. vii. 27.

Him and advance against the kingdom of darkness and destroy it.

In the Sibylline books, the promise was that "swords of fire shall fall from heaven and on earth great flames shall come, and every soul of man and every sea shall shudder before the face of the Immortal."[1]

So in the fourth book of Esdras the triumph of the end is hastened by the activity of the heavenly kingdom.

"It shall come to pass in those days that the elect and holy children of God (*i.e.* the angels) shall descend from the heights of heaven and join their Lord with the children of men. And from henceforth there will be nothing that corrupts any more, for He the Son of Man hath appeared and sits upon the throne of His Majesty, and all evil shall vanish and pass away before His face."[2]

And this, we may feel, was the expectation of those who when our Lord came waited for the Kingdom of God; they looked for a kingdom to be established on earth by the King Messiah aided by the supernatural powers of God Most High.

[1] Westcott's *Introduction to the Study of the Gospels*, p. 97.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 109.

VI

Having now seen that the phrase in itself, in its historical setting, and as interpreted by our Lord's use of it, means in the first place a kingdom, and in the second, a kingdom whose origin is of heaven rather than earth, we now ask, Does our Lord show any consciousness of any such kingdom? That He regarded Himself as having come from above and from the Father is perfectly clear. That He still belonged to the heavenly sphere, was still "in heaven"[1] though on earth, seems also plain. This heaven was not only opened to Him, but to the Baptist, who saw the Holy Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven;[2] and to Nathanael, to whom was promised the sight of the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man; and we may believe, in varying measure the same high privilege was given to the other disciples and Apostles. Three of them at least were privileged to see the strange and wonderful sight of the Transfiguration and to

[1] St. John iii. 13. [2] St. John i. 32.

hear the mysterious voices of the departed as they spake with their Master concerning the decease He should accomplish at Jerusalem.

Christ, too, was constantly in communication with the angels who visited Him in times of need and extremity. And this is, of course, what we should expect. If to Elijah and Elisha, if to Moses and Samuel were given revelations of the Unseen, it is extremely unlikely that the Head of Humanity should have voluntarily limited Himself in this regard. But not only was the Unseen His home, but He spoke of it familiarly, as one who comes to our country from a foreign land speaks of those matters which he thinks will interest his friends. He corrects the mistake His disciples shared with others that this earth was the only inhabitable spot in the universe. "In My Father's house," He said, "are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you."[1] He seriously warns them against the danger of casting stumbling-blocks before children and helpless ones as though they had no one to look after them. "Their

[1] St. John xiv. 2.

angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven."[1] He bids the hard Pharisees remember that if to them the conversion of a penitent was of no consequence, it excited the liveliest joy in the realm of heaven. He bade the Sadducees realise that their foolish question about the widow's relation to her seven husbands ignored the fact that all who are worthy to attain the heavenly state have done with marriage, for they are equal unto the angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. He lifts the veil between the seen and the Unseen, and shows us Lazarus resting in Abraham's bosom and Dives in torment. He marvels that the curiosity of the Apostles was so limited to the things of this earth that no one ever asked Him, when He was on the eve of returning to His heavenly home, Whither goest Thou? The whole visible world was to His keen eye alive with spiritual beings. He rebukes the fever, the wind, and the raging sea, as though He were addressing personal agents. So, too, He speaks with authority to the demons who had mastered

[1] St. Matt. xviii. 10.

some poor frail human beings, as naturally as He rebuked Peter or the disciples.

The theory that He accommodated His teaching to that of His own time, and that these expressions do not represent His real view, will not bear examination. For such accommodation would have meant allying Himself with one religious party against another. That view of the nearness of the spiritual world to our earth, of the existence of angels and spirits, was not the view that was held everywhere. As a matter of fact, it was strongly opposed by the Sadducees, who were bitterly hostile to our Lord on this very ground. Our Lord deliberately took sides on this question, and, according to the view of those who hold that there is no such thing as possession, took the dark, unenlightened, and wrong side. Is this possible? Is it in the least likely that He, knowing that the thought of oppression by dark malignant spirits was an idle superstition, should have encouraged it? Would He not rather have said to the sufferers: "Be reasonable, no one is hurting you, believe in God and in Me, and you will be free from this foolish idea"? But, on the contrary, He

not only deepens their conviction that they were obsessed by the Evil One, but seems to have taken special pains in educating His disciples in the faith of his real existence. There was, for example, no necessity that He should speak to them of that spiritual conflict in the wilderness which was wrapped up in His own bosom. The more spiritual men become, the less ready are they to speak of the secret things which belong to themselves and God. And yet the Son of God reveals this, and—if I may be pardoned for saying it—reveals it in the most dramatic way. The devil comes to Him, speaks to Him, exercises constraint over Him, leaves Him. Unless He wished to warn His disciples of the presence and activity of the Evil One, it is difficult to see why He should have told them this secret at all, and certainly not in such a personal way.

So too, in order to make clear that the results we see are not always due to natural causes, He worked one of the strangest and most mysterious of His miracles. The permission granted to the demons to enter the swine was not given simply to assure the man that his captors had left him, nor as punishment for

those who were breaking a Jewish law, but to make His disciples realise that the madness and degradation of the demoniac was due to actual possession. As a great general, wishing to show his officers where on the field of battle some great danger lies, takes action to unmask a hidden battery, so He unmasks the forces of evil—makes them display, as it were, on the open. And no one who saw the contrast between the two pictures,—that, on the one hand, of the enraged demoniacs, and the quiet herd feeding on the cliff; and that, on the other, of the two quiet, self-possessed men and the infuriated swine rushing to their destruction,—and connected it with our Lord's permission to the evil spirits to gratify their malicious will, when they, at His command, left their victims, — but would have a clear demonstration of the presence and hostility of a kingdom of darkness.

Our Lord then faced two worlds: the world of light, the home of His Father, the abode of the blessed spirits; and the world of darkness, of evil principalities and powers ever on the watch to destroy man. Of these worlds He was always conscious; but He moved

amongst people who were blind to them, and whose eyes had to be opened.

VII

The question is, Did the words "the Kingdom of Heaven," which were so often on His lips, refer to one of these worlds?

We have seen that the phrase itself exegetically and historically favours this view, and we have seen that it would not be unnatural for our Lord to speak of a kingdom of unseen powers and intelligences which He was always recognising; but the words have been so widely interpreted of a society of human beings, the Church or some social kingdom, that a closer examination is necessary before we can be convinced that the words refer to the Unseen.

First, then, how does our Lord describe this kingdom?

He was on one momentous occasion urged to make a statement as to its nature. Pilate, the representative of the mightiest kingdom on earth, asked Him the plain question, "Art thou a king?" implying the further question,

If so, what is Thy kingdom? It was not surprising that Pilate should have asked it, for Christ's arrest had been accomplished without the slightest resistance, and it seemed as though He was a king without a kingdom. In reply, our Lord answered that He was a King. But His kingdom was not of this world, neither in origin nor support.[1] Had it been a kingdom like that of Rome, His servants would have fought for Him. But it was not an earthly but a spiritual, not a natural but a supernatural kingdom. The unwillingness to fight, to which Pilate had doubtless referred in his question, was not then due to cowardice or smallness of numbers, but simply to the fact that His kingdom was a different one and proceeded on different lines. What, then, was his sovereignty? His sovereignty consisted in witness-bearing: "To this end have I been born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the Truth." That is the primary duty of a king, to declare to the world what his kingdom stands for, to make people see it and know it; that, too, was His purpose, to witness to the majesty of

[1] St. John xviii. 36.

the truth—*i.e.* of the inner reality of things, the significance of the Unseen.[1]

With this thought in our minds, it is more easy to understand the meaning of the great announcement which was made both by Himself and the Baptist repeatedly—namely, that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. What was at hand? we ask. The Church, which was not formed for three years after, on the Day of Pentecost? The new ideal society of which the socialist dreams, and which is still far in the future? Or did He mean a kingdom of unseen realities—a spiritual kingdom? The description our Lord has already given to Pilate leaves little doubt that it was the kingdom of that other world to which He was referring.

And that view is confirmed by words which have made the conception of an earthly society impossible. He was definitely asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom would come. Now, had He been thinking of His Church, which He was about to build on the rock of St. Peter, or of some social Utopia to be realised in the far future, then He would have replied by an answer which would have given

[1] St. John xviii. 37.

some idea of date, or by words which would have suggested the impropriety of the question, as when His own disciples asked Him of the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, He replied, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father has set within His own authority."[1] But He does not adopt either of these courses. On the contrary, He tells the Pharisees two things: (1) That His kingdom does not come in such a way that any one can tell where it is or what it is. It comes not with observation, but is secret, hidden, invisible. (2) That it is already in their midst. That was the great surprise. It was as astonishing as the answer that the Baptist gave to the priests and Levites who asked him whether he was the Christ. No, he was not the Christ, but the Christ was there amongst them. "There standeth One among you whom ye know not."[2] So, too, the kingdom was already there, working in their midst. What was working? we ask. And the answer might be, that the principles and laws of Christ's future kingdom were already moving within the hearts of men. The Revised

[1] Acts i. 7. [2] St. John i. 26.

Version, which has adopted the rendering "the Kingdom of God is within you," seems to favour this. But such an interpretation is open to two objections. In the first place, it hardly seems an answer. The Pharisees had their minds set on the advent of a real kingdom; they wished to know when they might expect it. Now, if there were no kingdom at all, but only the operation of certain great laws which He had revealed in His teaching, it seems difficult to believe that our Lord would have so expressed Himself. In the second place, it could not have been true to say that these laws were at that time within the hearts and minds of the very men who rejected them. On the other hand, if we are right in believing that our Lord had in mind that spiritual kingdom which, through the presence of its King veiled in flesh, was already at work in a new way upon the world, the answer seems natural. And that impression is confirmed by yet another passage. Amongst Christ's miracles none had struck the popular imagination more forcibly than the expulsion of demons. It had evidently helped forward our Lord's popularity. His enemies therefore counteracted the tide of

public opinion by asserting everywhere that these cures were not done by His own power but by that of Beelzebub. Our Lord showed the absurdity of such reasoning by saying that in so doing Satan would be defeating his own ends, producing civil war in his own kingdom, which would then speedily come to an end.

These great miracles were not, then, due to Beelzebub, but rather to the activity of the Kingdom of God. "If I by the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the Kingdom of God is come upon you."[1] "Upon you"—the words are significant, speaking of a sudden irruption or invasion. The unseen intelligences and powers of good had manifested themselves. But again there is yet another passage in which the thought of the kingdom and its expression in miracles and works of supernatural power are connected. It was part of the commission of the seventy to preach and work miracles. These were to be looked upon as signs that the kingdom was at hand: "Heal the sick . . . and say, The Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."[2]

[1] St. Luke xi. 20. [2] St. Luke x. 9.

VIII

We must not pursue this part of the subject further, but before I close, I must add in confirmation the striking evidence which the Apocalypse discloses. The writer of that book, whom I believe to be the Apostle John, has for his subject the conflict between Christianity and the world, between the Church and Rome. He is not, however, intent on showing, as we might have expected, such a picture of the struggle which the infant Church was engaged in as some bishop in India or China might supply to-day. It is true that he portrays the Church under the image of a woman and her foes, the emperors and the pagan priesthood under that of the beast and the false prophet. But he does not concentrate our attention on the human side of the conflict, but rather on its spiritual aspect as being a battle fought out in the cities of the world between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of Hell. He is not intent on showing us, as we might have expected, a picture of the great human forces that were arrayed on either side, of

the small bands of Christians maintaining, in the cities and villages of Asia Minor, in the great commercial and intellectual centres of Greece, nay, in Rome itself, a brave conflict against the forces of the emperor and his governors, the pagan priesthood and their devotees, the fickle crowd and public opinion. These are referred to under the mysterious symbols of the two beasts and the false prophet, but the mind is carried away from earth to the spiritual sphere, there to behold a mighty conflict being waged against the dragon. After a very brief description of the condition of the Church as seen by the seven churches of Asia Minor, he takes us at once into the spiritual sphere. We find ourselves in the secret recesses which lie behind all outward phenomena. We are in the Kingdom of Heaven. A revelation or unveiling of the mysteries that lie behind all created things is made to St. John by Jesus Christ Himself. And we there see Him not ruling alone in solitary splendour, but as the Leader and the Centre of a vast host of spiritual beings who are, under His governance, guiding and directing the affairs of the world. "They are now engaged in the activities of their

manifold ministries—now as worshipping before the throne, now as bearing messages to the world, or as stationed in some place of trust, restraining elemental forces or themselves under restraint until the moment for action has arrived, or as presiding over great departments of nature. Sometimes their ministries are cosmic; they are entrusted with the execution of world-wide judgments, or they form the rank and file of the armies of heaven who fight God's battle with evil whether diabolical or human: the Abyss is under their custody. Sometimes an angel is employed in the service of the Church offering the prayers of the saints, or presiding over the destinies of a local brotherhood, or ministering to an individual brother, *e.g.* the Seer himself. No charge seems to be too great . . . none too ordinary; throughout the book the angels are represented as ready to fill any place and do any work for which they are sent!"[1] We see a real Kingdom—a Kingdom of Heaven.

But not only do we learn from the study of the book what the Kingdom of Heaven means, but also how it comes, in what sense it may be

[1] H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, p. clxiv.

described as being at hand. Till the coming of Christ, the book of God's plan is sealed, no one in heaven or earth can make out its meaning; but directly He comes, the book is given to Him, and as He breaks seal after seal and turns page after page there is seen to be increased activity in the spiritual realm. Angels fly here and there on mysterious biddings, and great judgments follow, which are recognised to be the appeals of heaven to the powers of evil, whether human or spiritual, to surrender. So too in the second part of the book the same thought is pursued. We see the heavenly counterpart to the story of the Nativity as given by St. Luke. The birth of the Divine Child is followed by an attempt on the part of the great red dragon to kill Him. This excites the wrath of the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the conflict with evil which ensues the powers of wickedness are defeated. Satan is cast down into a lower sphere, and his angels cast out with him.

Such, very briefly, is one aspect of that wonderful book which might very fitly be called the Revelation of the Kingdom of Heaven. We learn there, as we could not

from the Gospels, how comparatively small and unimportant the activities of human beings are; how, whilst they are waging bitter warfare one with another, the great powers of the world to come are engaged in setting right things that are wrong, healing the oppressed, and blessing the sick.

It is as this thought of the ever-present pressure of the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth becomes larger in our minds that we learn to pray with fresh interest the prayer He Himself taught us, "Thy kingdom come." But not simply that. There is good reason for believing that the words "on earth as it is in heaven" do not refer simply to the petition that God's will may be done, but to the two preceding ones, and that we are taught to pray "Thy Kingdom come on earth as it has already come in Heaven." There in the spiritual sphere the battle has been won, the probation of the angels is over, as one day our own will be, and there is there, as in the future there will be in that place which the Lord has ordained, a perfect well-ordered Kingdom of free beings conquering and to conquer.

We have now finished the first part of our

task. We have seen that there has never been any complete agreement as to what the phrase means; that, whilst some have looked for a Theocracy, others have expected a perfected Church or Society, and yet others have laid stress upon its being "a cosmos within the cosmos, with such culminating periods and moments" as that of the Incarnation.

It is this last thought I have ventured to put before you, but in doing so I have regarded it not as a system of abstract laws but a kingdom of living, intelligent beings. That such a view is alien from our thinking of to-day I am well aware. Whilst perhaps every one is agreed that it is inconceivable that the limitless space in which the solar systems revolve should be void and empty, yet few are disposed to return to that larger view which the Apostles held of "a world peopled with spiritual beings. They believed in invisible assistants who were doing God's pleasure and sympathising with His children. The hosts of heaven moved in myriads in the sky. The messengers of God went to and fro working His righteous will. The sons of God shouted for joy when the creation leaped to light. In

every work of nature—in the summer rain and the winter frost, in the lifting of the billow on the sea and the growth of the flower on the plain, there were holy ones concerned who sang the hymn of continued creation to the Eternal Love. The very winds themselves were angels, and the flaming fires ministers of God. It was a happier and a grander world to live in then than now."[1] But it is too fine a conception for an age that is rejoicing in the blessings of a refined materialism. We need, therefore, patience as well as a high spiritual temper if we are to do justice to a thought that runs counter to the trend of our own times as it did to that of our Lord's time. We must dismiss our prejudices and step backwards into the spirit and atmosphere of that ancient time, and then we may hope to hear with a new sense the ever-repeated summons, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

[1] Stopford Brooke, *Sermons*, p. 306.

CHAPTER II

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE CHURCH

I

WE speak to-day of the relation of the Church to the Kingdom of Heaven. And let me say at once that, in spite of the fact that the identification of the Church with the Kingdom of Heaven was not known till the time of Augustine—so far, that is, as such knowledge is expressed in Christian writings—yet it was both natural and edifying. The parables comparing the kingdom to a net thrown into the sea, to a mustard seed expanding into a great tree, to seed sown in a field, were reasonably interpreted of a divine society that was sweeping all men into its embrace, developing with wonderful power, and showing within its fold evil as well as good.

And the idea in itself was magnificent. There against falling Rome was seen the rising and

growing Kingdom of God with its wide and increasing empire, the City with foundations that could not be shaken, glowing with a patriotism such as no earthly kingdom had ever known, blessed with rulers of great dignity and loftiness of character, and with more than a suggestion of a universal monarchy that should in after days overshadow the earth. Here at last was a spiritual kingdom visibly expressed, speaking but one tongue though widely distributed, governing empires yet without the help of the sword, receiving ambassadors from subject princes, and imposing its laws everywhere. Had it not been for the subsequent history, for the degradation of the idea in the abominable lives of popes, cardinals, and bishops, for the tyranny that was substituted for love, the immorality that replaced chastity, the greed that took the place of humble content, the disruption that broke up the unity, men might have been content with the conception in spite of the difficulty of making it fit the express sayings of Christ.

No one was disposed to ask questions so long as the Church expressed itself as a great

spiritual kingdom; but when this faded away, and there was seen a kingdom as corrupt and rapacious as any kingdom of the world had been, then doubts were expressed and the testimony of the Scriptures inquired into. How could it be said of a Church whose most conspicuous members were haughty and proud cardinals that none but those with the spirit of children could belong to it? Who would describe a body that grew hard with formalism as having a spirit and tone of an altogether different character from that of the scribes and Pharisees? Why shonld the Lord compare a society that was so conspicuous that it was like a city set on a hill to treasure hid in a field, or leaven concealed in the flour? These were the questions men asked when it seemed that the Kingdom of Heaven had become the Kingdom of Hell.

But though both the Scripture and History forbade the application any longer to those who made the Bible their guide, yet the Church had so many characteristics of a kingdom about it that the identification still held its ground. And the endeavour to-day to maintain the temporal suzerainty of the Pope, to preserve the pomp

and dignity that belongs to the papal throne, to lay stress on all those worldly considerations which are so puzzling to all but the Papists, is simply the expression of an honest faith that the Kingdom of Heaven is the Roman Church and that Christ's Viceroy is the Pope.

It is of great interest that when men were beginning to familiarise themselves with the thought that some new interpretation for the Kingdom of Heaven must be found, a brilliant Essay by an anonymous author again directed attention to the conception of a visible society. Professor Seeley, in his book entitled *Ecce Homo*,—which might, we think, have been more suitably called *Ecce Regnum*,—gave the idea an extraordinarily fresh and original turn.

Starting with the Lord's announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, he goes on to show that Christ was the Founder of an external and legislative commonwealth; into this kingdom men enter by baptism, and to it they become attached with great devotion because of their love for Christ. "The first propelling power . . . is the personal relation of loyal vassalage of the citizens to the Prince

of the Theocracy." It was as wide as mankind. As the Roman Church gave the kingdom a monarchical character, so this brilliant sketch makes it a republic; for there is no monarchical authority, no royal privileges, no distinction between citizen and citizen. I have mentioned this here not because I think it a true interpretation of the Kingdom of Heaven, but because it shows that a very careful and thoughtful reader of the New Testament, finding that Christ came to found a Church, and that this Church had the marks of a kingdom about it, decided that it must be the Kingdom of Heaven. It fails just as other interpretations have failed in not taking into account all that Christ said about the Kingdom. But if the Church be not the Kingdom, how is it that so many have supposed that it was? What is its relation to the kingdom?

II

In the first place, it is greater than the Kingdom of Heaven because its relationship to Christ is so much closer. The latter is that society over which He reigns; the Church is

the Body which He possesses. Of the Kingdom He is King, but of the Body He is the Head. The Kingdom is the sphere of His presence, the Church is His fulness. The kingdom consists in the main of subjects whom He created, the Church consists of His children who, in the words of an early tradition, are members of His Flesh and His Bones. The Kingdom remains in eternity as it remains in time, the servant of Christ; but the Church becomes His Bride, exalted with her Head to the centre of the universe.

But though differing from one another in these respects, there is nevertheless the closest relationship. As the Church's Head is King over the kingdom, the members of the Church have the same kind of relationship to it that a Queen Consort has to the realm over which her husband reigns. In this world, foreign and strange to those whose habit it is to roam the vast and limitless universe, the Church acts as a kind of vicegerent for her invisible King. In this sense she is herself a kingdom, and may be called, as she is, the Kingdom of Christ. Some say she is the Kingdom in the making, as some might speak of India to-day as an Oriental

England in the making. Being, then, so closely related, it is not surprising that some should have identified them together, for their likenesses are stronger than their dissimilarities.

Both have the same King to serve, both the same enemies to fight against; both have the same laws of holiness; both the same ideal of freedom. You can predicate the same principles of both, and therefore all the parables that apply to the Church apply to the Kingdom of Heaven, though, as we have seen, not all the parables of the Kingdom apply to the Church.

There is a distinction, however, which is well put before us in our Lord's promise to St. Peter after his confession of Christ's kingship: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."[1] Here the Church is spoken of as something in the future, the Kingdom of Heaven as

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 18, 19.

already present: here, too, the Church is looked upon as a building to be erected; but the Kingdom of Heaven as a closed realm of supernatural powers, which on being unlocked would issue forth to bless mankind.

On the rock of Peter—or, as seems more likely, Peter's faith—Christ will build His Church. This Church stands on earth, and will never be overthrown. But it has intimate relations with heaven. The acts of its ministry will not only affect the social conditions of earth, but also those of heaven; they will not only make changes in the natural, but also in the supernatural sphere. Whatever is loosed on earth is loosed in heaven. Whatever is bound on earth is bound in heaven. Our Lord recognises it, or rather its ministry, as a steward possessing the keys of an invisible world of spiritual wonders and powers. We may say that the relation of the Church to the Kingdom of Heaven is fourfold. She is a home in which the mysteries of the King of heaven may be learned. She is a school in which the children of the kingdom may be trained. She is a spiritual hospital in which the healing powers of the Kingdom of Heaven may be felt.

She is further a state or kingdom in which the social principles of the kingdom may be manifested.

It is of the first three I shall speak this morning, reserving what I have to say on the fourth point in a lecture that is to follow.

III

In the first place, the Church is a home where the mysteries of the kingdom may be preserved. There are mysteries—"unto you," said our Lord to His disciples, "it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given." [1]

These mysteries or secrets not then disclosed were connected with such important subjects as: the causes of the failure of the kingdom, the presence of the wicked mingled with the good; why it is so secretly expansive; why it is so widely diffused; why it arouses such excitement; why it is so zealous. These are questions constantly being asked, and it is the Church that is to answer them.

For example, why does the Kingdom of

[1] St. Matt. xiii. 11.

Heaven, filled with a zeal for souls that can only be compared to a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, and endowed with powers and resources that are practically infinite, appear to fail? And the answer is, The principles she seeks to establish are good, but the soil of the human heart is either hard, slight, or encumbered.

Or again, why are evil people allowed to dwell in the world at all? Why should not those who serve the kingdom expel them? And the answer is, They have not sufficient discernment; they do not know clearly enough the difference between the good and the bad.

Or again, why does the kingdom make a beginning in such a small way, with individuals rather than nations or tribes? Because, like the mustard seed, that is the law of its growth.

But is it to have no effect on society? Like the leaven in the meal, it is even now secretly permeating it, and one day the whole of society will be leavened by its principles.

But do men care about that which is so secretly hidden? Yes; again and again it will be found to stimulate large and generous sacrifices for it. Is human society always to remain so mixed? No; one day the bad will

be cast out of it, as the bad fish are cast out of the net when it is pulled ashore.

Such are some of the revelations of the mysteries of the kingdom which Christ gave to His Church. And they were given to be preserved and afterwards disseminated by her. The Church was to be their home. "Till ideas are more than wanderers," writes Dean Church, "seeking but not attaining a home and a public recognition in the convictions of those who act and construct and govern, they are like powerless ghosts, however much they may have to recommend them." Even a book by itself could not ensure the continuous life of religious ideas. "Books preserve ideas but not their empire on minds. . . . Truth and ideas within the leaves of a book are not the same thing as truth and ideas in the actual lives and speech of men, in the market-place or by the hearth, in rules which govern life and direct energy, in the hopes and aims which lighten labour and soothe pain and comfort sorrow. . . . (So) God provided a sanctuary for the great religious ideas of the kingdom in an organised society, the Church, as He provided a home for great moral and political

ideas in an organised society, the State." The Church, then, preserves and guards the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is also her duty to interpret them to mankind.

It is much to be wished that the Church would contain more teachers who, to use the Lord's own words, "have been made disciples to the Kingdom of Heaven." Here is a vast spiritual realm, limitless as the universe, yet acting upon us day by day, and men hardly know of its existence. Its King, His armies, the laws under which they act, their successes, and failures, are so little known that men stare when they hear of a single intervention. The whole gospel is in these days supposed to relate to a man's behaviour towards other men, is confined to the sphere in which we live, as though no other realm existed. It is true that much on the subject of duty to neighbours was said by the Lord, but evidently His main teaching, both before and after the Resurrection, was about the kingdom. That men are interested in it is clear from the fact they not only listened greedily to His teaching, but have always shown the liveliest interest in such books as Dante's *Divina Commedia*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's*

Progress, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which have in their own way dealt largely with this fascinating theme. The mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven have not all been told; it is for the Church to take up its parable again and show them.

IV

But it is not only the mysteries that have to be revealed, but men have to be trained to receive and understand them. And the Church, as Neander pointed out long ago, is a seminary for the heavenly community in which its members are training for their perfect development, though not confined to the human race, but comprehending also a higher spiritual world, where that archetype to the realisation of which mankind are now tending, is already realised.[1] She stands to the Kingdom of Heaven as the School of Art stands to the kingdom of art, the School of Music to the kingdom of music, the School of Medicine to the kingdom of health. No one could think of identifying them, and yet at the same time no

[1] *Planting of Christianity*, I. 503, Bohn Ed., Neander. Oxford House Papers, "The Church." R. W. Church.

one would suppose that, as a rule, art, music, or medicine can be learned except by the schools, which supply not only the inspiration but the actual practical duties that keep the inspiration alive; not only the teachers, but the models, examples, and illustrations which make the teaching effective. This has always been felt. Even Renan does not hesitate to assert that "Beyond the family and outside the State man has need of the Church. . . . Civil society, whether it calls itself a commune, a canton, or a province, a state or fatherland, has many duties towards the improvement of the individual, but what it does is necessarily limited. The family ought to do much more, but often it is insufficient; sometimes it is wanting altogether. The association created in the name of moral principle can alone give to every man coming into the world a bond which unites him with the past, duties as to the future, examples to follow, a heritage to receive and to transmit, and a tradition of devotion to continue."

As we shall see in the last chapter, there are certain principles of great importance to be mastered before the spiritual faculties of sight

and hearing can be so developed as to make men see the invisible and hear the inaudible. And not only principles to be learned, but also symbols, coincidences, correspondences to be read and understood. The sights and sounds of the Kingdom of Heaven are not more obvious than those of art or music. They cannot be seen at first glance, nor heard by the untrained. They need care, watchfulness, and knowledge. And the well-instructed disciples are often slower in their appreciation of them than those whose faith is neither so full nor so clear. It is interesting to notice the great pains that members of the Psychical Research Society are taking in pursuing seriously and scientifically every scrap of evidence they can find for the existence of another realm, and for communion with those who by death have been removed from this world. Records of apparitions, sounds, automatic writings are all examined with the greatest possible care by those who have already laid down certain criteria by which the evidences of the invisible realm may be judged. They are wiser in their generation than the children of light, for they are more in earnest, more self-sacrificing in their endeavours.

So too, how patiently laborious are those who have the care of the blind and deaf in their endeavours to restore them to a world the contact with which they have lost. Not only are schools appointed where every help and appliance is supplied, but where teachers skilled in meeting their particular difficulties are always ready to lead them forward from point to point. Many lessons may be gathered from the methods which they have pursued which would be found illustrative of similar workings in the Church of God. The story of Helen Keller's partial restoration to the worlds of sight and sound is a parable of never-ceasing application for those who have a similar work before them in teaching the blind to see and the deaf to hear. In her case, the first step was separation from her home, that she might be alone with her teacher; and the next was the careful use of the only faculty that remained to her, that of touch. At first she made no distinction between the touch of one thing or another. To her mind a flower, a dress, a human hand, a dog's skin, paper, a knife, were the same. She had no name by which she could either make or preserve a distinction. It was her

teacher who gave her this, and by means of it opened out the worlds of sight and sound in spite of permanent blindness and deafness.

Now our Lord assumes that we are naturally blind to the sights of the spiritual realm. To suppose that we see is not only a mistake but a sin, and on the other hand a man's confession of blindness is a proof that he is in a right relation to the King. "If ye were blind, ye would have no sin; but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."[1] The Church then is an "instructor of the blind," her prime duty being that of her Master, who at the outset of His ministry declared that He was anointed with the Spirit of the Lord and sent with this special purpose, that He might "recover sight to the blind."[2] Her first work is that of bringing all men into her school, making disciples or learners from all the nations. She then devotes her whole attention to the development of that faculty of faith by which alone men can see the invisible and hear the inaudible. She does this by her system of correspondences. By this system not only has everything its spiritual counterpart, but the spiritual counter-

[1] St. John ix. 41. [2] St. Luke iv. 18.

part is its source and author. The divine ordering of her services, shape of her buildings, the arrangement and form of her furniture, the vestments of her ministers, are all intended to be introductions into the sphere of spirit, developments of the faculty of faith. The saints depicted in the windows of her buildings remind the children of the kingdom of "the spirits of just men made perfect"; the angels, of those who are ministers "to the heirs of salvation"; the Font of the cleansing from sin; the Lord's Table of the bread of life; the Bible of the heavenly wisdom; the Liturgy of the way in which the Eternal Father may be approached. Everything has its spiritual meaning, points to something beyond itself. It is in this elementary way that the Church leads her scholars to see that not only within her buildings but everywhere throughout Nature—

> "Two worlds are ours,
> 'Tis only sin, forbids us to descry
> The mystic heaven and earth within,
> Plain as the sea and sky."

It is of course true that the symbols of the Church may suggest nothing beyond the fact represented, as the sight of the sower sowing

seed, the fishermen separating the bad from the good, the diver seeking goodly pearls, may suggest nothing beyond the bare fact; but the Church has failed in her task if the symbols by which alone the blind are enabled to see and the deaf to hear still remain unexplained.

It is equally true whether she presents symbols or dogmas. The dogmas, as enshrined in the great historic creeds, are means, not ends; their purpose is not fulfilled if they lead men to rest in them as charters of a great past, as monuments of victories won at great critical periods of the Church's history. It is only when they are seen to be revelations of great unseen realities, as helps towards making the conceptions of the living God fuller and nobler, that they are fulfilling the office for which they were given. It is true that they are important as protective defences against the ravages of the wild boar of unbelief, and that they reveal the real character of the heresies which are constantly arising in one form or another to destroy the faith; but even from this point of view it remains true that only so far as they show how the fair beauty

of God in Christ has been marred, do they justify their place in the Church of God.

The Church is never concerned with facts as simply facts, never with dogmas as dogmas, but only in their relation to the Kingdom of Heaven of which they are the perpetual witness. Her never-ceasing endeavour is always to get beneath the letter to the spirit which informs it, beneath the outward visible phenomena to the great principles and truth which they enshrine. The complaint that men continually make, "I do not see why I should believe this or that," can never be effectually met by an appeal to the authority of the Church on which it is made to rest, but rather by showing that the vision of the spiritual kingdom which alone gives life, is spoiled without it, that certain features are out of proportion when it has no place, that the symmetry and beauty of the Unseen fail of their perfection without it. So by worship, catechetical instruction, Bible classes, sermons, and the like, the children of the kingdom are taught to expect and look out for certain indications of that invisible world into which they have been brought. As they learn in the world how to read the signs

of the weather, or the movements of political history, so here in the school of God they learn to read "the signs of the times,"[1] the expressions of the activity of the Kingdom of Heaven, in the natural, political, and spiritual kingdoms. And gradually the Invisible Realm becomes the actual realm, and the sphere of the Seen only transient. What we see and touch are only phenomena of great abiding principles which we gradually discover.

And this, our growing spiritual experience of an invisible kingdom which has the most intimate relations with us, is confirmed by the inspired record. There we see everything, whether kings or prophets; ministers or laity; rich or poor; continually acted on by unseen powers. Angels move on and off the stage of human affairs naturally and constantly. Messages are sent to the King of kings and answers returned. Startling events such as the Flood, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the destruction of Jerusalem, are predicted long before they take place. Great historical movements, the rise and fall of empires are directed and guided in the council

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 3.

chambers of the Most High. The Kingdom of Heaven is seen pressing in on the kingdoms of men, and the history of human progress is no longer simply an evolution of humanity, but an evolution cared for and guided by wise and loving hands. It is an evolution through the spiritual environment of a spiritual kingdom of love. Not at once is it seen, but gradually, little by little. As "in the animal kingdom the senses open one by one, the eye progressing from the mere discernment of light and darkness to the blurred image of things near, and then to clearer vision of the more remote; the ear passing from the tremulous sound of vibration to distinguish with ever increasing delicacy the sounds of far-off things; so in the higher world the moral and spiritual senses rise and quicken till they compass qualities unknown before and impossible to the limited faculties of the earlier life. So man, not by any innate tendency to progress in himself, nor by the energies inherent in the protoplasmic cell from which he sets out, but by a continuous feeding and reinforcing of the process from without, attains the higher altitudes, and from the sense world at the mountain foot ascends with ennobled

and ennobling faculties until he greets the sun."[1]

V

But there are difficulties—no orderly progression such as we find in nature is possible in man because he is frequently violating it by the action of his free will. His independent self-assertion not only prevents his own progress, but produces moral confusion in the world in which he is. We are all familiar with the harm wrought by sin in society; how even a word spoken in anger may have wide reaching effects, disturbing and disarranging not only families and kinsfolk, but cities and neighbourhoods. And we seem to be taught that not only does sin produce confusion in this limited sphere of the earth, but in the universe of which it is but a tiny fragment. In our Lord's description of the penitent the first words of confession are those of sin against heaven: "Father, I have sinned against heaven."[2] The spiritual sphere had been disturbed by his self-will and independence; beneficent and good powers were

[1] Drummond, *Ascent of Man*, p. 146. Paper Ed.: Hodder & Stoughton.

[2] St. Luke xv. 21.

bound; opportunities and openings for grace were stayed; Heaven had been against him, and from the first, the mighty famine which led to his conversion was in sight. The retention of sins which follows impenitence implies the shutting up of the doors of heaven, the withholding of the dew of God's grace. We therefore hail with gladness the promise of the Lord that the Church, possessing as she does the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, is able to unloose what is bound. This unloosing must be taken in its widest possible sense. It not only refers to the help that is given towards the breaking of the habit which repeated sin makes, to the loosing of the soul from the bands of those sins which by its frailty it has committed, but to that outward confirmation of the loosing, whether, as seen in the restoration to Church privileges or to the restored health which sin has impaired. When Christ said to the paralytic, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee," He at the same time loosed him from the bands of palsy in which his body was held tightly bound. When St. Paul forgave the Corinthian sinner in the person of Christ, he not only restored him to right

relationship with God, but removed the barriers which kept him separate from his brethren.

The "keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" unlock all those chambers of healing grace, whether spiritual or bodily, which confer such remarkable spiritual benefits on mankind. They release for their work of mercy all those heavenly messengers which find such joy when one sinner repenteth. The disorder which the sin provoked is repaired, peace reigns where once was confusion, and the penitent finds himself not only in harmony with this world but that other world which so closely enwraps this. Directly Elijah saw Israel commit itself to that act of repentance which was expressed in the cry, "The Lord He is God! the Lord He is God!" he knew that the powers which had bound the heaven from giving rain would be dismissed and the rain would come.[1] On the other hand, the restraint which bound the mouths of the lions in Daniel's den was removed when his place was taken by his impenitent and tyrannical enemies. Judgment was loosed instead of mercy.[2]

[1] 1 Kings xviii. 44, 45. [2] Dan. vi. 24.

The Church, then, through the commission that is given her, is placed in the closest possible relation to the awful powers of the Unseen Kingdom. Effects follow her action which are strange to all those who are only concerned with natural causes and natural effects. The death that followed the sin of Ananias and Sapphira, and the blindness that overtook Elymas the sorcerer, are only illustrations of the high position the Church occupies as steward of the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; and so, too, not only in absolution but in those higher mysteries, the Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion, the Kingdom of Heaven is brought very nigh us, even "at the doors."[1]

VI

It might be naturally expected that with infinite resources and powers the kingdom would be able to have a stronger effect upon the world. It is, however, limited by disunion in the Church, its instrument. In itself it is perfectly united, its varied hosts vying with one another in love and self-sacrifice. Its

[1] St. Mark xiii. 29.

principle being that greatness is measured by service, that the chief is as the younger, and he that rules as he that doth serve, there is no shadow of self-seeking, and the great kingdom presses forward as one great united whole. It cannot work, however, in disregard of its own principles, and finding in the Church the desire for place and distinction, the love of authority and the dislike of obedience, it is limited and hindered. As when some great civilised kingdom that is seeking to build up some childlike race finds itself thwarted at every turn in its beneficent designs by the quarrellings and separations within the race it is seeking to elevate, so, too, the Kingdom of Heaven, instead of working on a large scale and using the whole Church as its instrument, can only work here and there in detached portions; and the power of the body of Christ is lost. Though the sacrifice of power is enormous, especially in the more direct conflict with the kingdom of darkness which the heathen world presents, yet there remains this small compensating advantage that the variety of natural gifts is seen more clearly.

But the vision of Hooker on his deathbed

remains as an aspiration of better things. The day before his death Dr. Saraivia found him "meditating the number and nature of angels and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven, and oh, that it might be so on earth."[1]

We shall not know till the end of all things, what have been the chief causes preventing the Church from being "perfected into one," but the vision of the undisturbed and harmonious unity of the Kingdom of Heaven not only inspires the wish in us, as it did in the dying Hooker, that the same unity may characterise the Church; but gives us new hope, inasmuch as we know that not only does it exist but that it presses on us from every side. Some day the Church herself will be one, even as the kingdom is one.

VII

Of this great future more ought to be said than we have space for. We have seen that the Church is the outpost of the Kingdom of Heaven and may be described as a kingdom

[1] *Life of Mr. Richard Hooker*, by Izaak Walton, S.P.C.K., p. 68.

inasmuch as in it Christ rules and through it the Kingdom of Heaven acts. It has its various orders of officers, it has its great principles of authority and obedience, it has its great confession of faith which binds its citizens in one common loyalty to its Head, and it is penetrated throughout by love, the gift of the One Spirit. It has, too, the larger number of its members already enrolled in heaven,[1] "the spirits of just men made perfect" doubtless exercising an influence in the Kingdom of which we have no conception. A time must come when the Church of the redeemed will be one with the Church of the firstborn, when the Kingdom of Christ will be one with the Kingdom of God in a way that is not yet possible. A day will come when all that we know belongs to the Kingdom of Heaven, its righteousness, peace, and joy[2] will be perfectly expressed in the Kingdom of Christ, when in St. Paul's language Christ will not only present the Church to Himself as a glorious Church,[3] not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but deliver it up as His Kingdom to God, even the Father, and the Kingdom

[1] Heb. xii. 23. [2] Rom. xiv. 17. [3] Eph. v. 27.

of Christ and the Kingdom of God will then be one.[1]

Such a unity is infinitely beyond all that we long for in the Church, because it means a unity throughout the universe. It means that the Kingdom of Heaven, which has been coming ever since the elder sons of God shouted for joy, has at last reached its goal—nothing withstands its power and its persuasive love. "All rule, authority, and power" that was hostile is abolished. The last enemy, Death, is destroyed. Men and angels are one, and the will of God is supreme. God is all in all. This unity of course implies large variety. Men are not angels and angels are not men; and though all are members of the one great family of God, distinctions remain. Christ's perfected kingdom, consisting of the redeemed, glorious in their resurrection bodies, has a relation to nature and the universe on the one hand and to their King on the other which is unique. Equal as the saints are to the angels in spiritual force and intelligence, yet they are superior in that wider knowledge and power which their union with nature gives them.

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 24.

They are not spirit only, but spirit expressed in forms of matter. And this fulness of life gives them authority which enables them to judge their elder spiritual brothers. And it may be that in their new home, one of the many mansions which belong to the Father but which has been specially prepared for them by Christ, they will constitute a new moral centre to the universe. Christ will reign through them and in them, and then the glorious vision of which St. John writes in his closing chapters of the Apocalypse will be revealed.

The kingdom-centre of the universe is now seen to be a city. The limitless realm of heaven has an enormous metropolis, the gates of which are open night and day. There, as nowhere else, is the Shrine of God, consisting of the vast company of the redeemed, each unit of which expresses some separate grace and beauty of the Incarnate Christ. The Lamb is the temple thereof. And there, too, is the light in which the nations walk, and there the treasury to which the kings of the earth bring their glory. The relation of Christ's kingdom to the Kingdom of Heaven is now reversed. Instead of the Church being the outpost through which

the forces of the Kingdom of Heaven work on an alien world, a fortress beleagured from without and divided and disunited within, she is now the central Temple of the universe, sinless, loyal, and true, through which streams forth in never-ceasing movements the water of life that proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. There are now new possibilities for the universe, and the mighty, far-reaching results of the Incarnation are seen. It is "the times of the restoration of all things"[1] which are summed up in Christ, "the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth,"[2] and not only do the saints see what is the dispensation of the Mystery which from all ages hath been hid in God, but to "principalities and powers in the heavenly places is at last made fully known the manifold wisdom of God."[3]

[1] Acts iii. 21. [2] Eph. i. 10. [3] Eph. iii. 10.

CHAPTER III

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND NATURE

SO far we have seen that there is good reason to believe that by the Kingdom of God our Lord meant that heavenly Kingdom of spiritual intelligences, which, though it had expressed itself in manifold activities before Christ came, as we see from the Old Testament, was specially "at hand" after the Incarnation, being seen in the King Himself and in the wonderful works, both physical and spiritual, which were done by our Lord and His Apostles.

Of course such a thought at once brings us face to face with a supernatural order, and the question naturally arises, What is the relation between the Supernatural and the Natural, between the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of Nature, between the Unseen and the Seen? Now there has always been

a tendency in man's mind to deny the supernatural. "It has become a commonplace in some schools of thought," writes the Bishop of Ossory, "that the very idea of the supernatural is now obsolete, and that the word which expresses it must be abandoned. Science has given us a great conception of the unity of nature, and has taught us that the laws which pervade the whole are unvarying. When facts are observed which seem to violate any of these laws, it is a mistake to jump hastily to the conclusion that here is a realm outside the system of nature. In due time, when Science has done her patient work, it will be found, we are told, that all such facts must be included—they are due to the operation of natural forces which were formerly overlooked, and are instances of the sway of laws previously unknown."[1] But what if it should be found that we are in the presence of the supernatural without going outside the realm of nature? What are we to say if we find that in man's free will there is clear evidence of another order interfering with what we call the natural order?

[1] *Christianity and the Supernatural*, by the Right Rev. C. F. D'Arcy, D.D., Bishop of Ossory, p. 12. Longmans.

Shall we not then be ready to feel that He who conceived the natural order conceived also with it, as part of the universal system of things, a spiritual order, an order of free beings able to use or misuse, to their advantage or disadvantage, the natural sequence of cause and effect which we call law?

I

But before making that inference, let us clearly understand what we mean by Nature and what by the Supernatural. And here I cannot do better than adopt the words of Horace Bushnell, whose book *Nature and the Supernatural* is an admirable exposition of this whole part of the subject.

"The Latin etymology of the word Nature," he rightly says, "presents the true force of the term clear of all ambiguity. The nature (*natura*) of a thing is the future participle of its being or becoming—its 'about to be' or its 'about to come to pass'; and the radical idea is that there is in the thing whose nature we speak of, or in the whole of things called nature, an about to be, a definite futurition, a fixed law of coming to pass, such that, given the things or

whole of things, all the rest will follow by an inherent necessity. In this view, nature—sometimes called 'universal nature,' and sometimes 'the system of nature'—is that created realm of being or substance which has an acting, a going on, or process from within itself under and by its own laws. . . . And that is supernatural, whatever it be, that is either not in the chain of natural cause and effect, or which acts on the chain of cause and effect in nature, from without the chain . . ."[1]

A supernatural event, then, would be any action from without, whether from God, angels, or men, that modifies or interrupts the natural processes, combinations, and results of nature. The supernatural, according to this, is not a rare but an everyday event; for as often as man exercises his free will or choice, so often there is a modification of some natural law. It implies, then, another system beside that of nature, a higher one—that "of spiritual being and government, for which nature exists, a system not under the law of cause and effect, but ruled and marshalled under other kinds of laws, and able continually to act upon or vary the

[1] *Nature and the Supernatural*, Bushnell, p. 19. Dickinson.

action of the processes of nature." And this "spiritual realm is much more properly called a system than the natural, because it is closer to God, higher in its consequence, and contains in itself the ends or final causes for which the other exists and to which the other is to be made subservient. There is, however, a constant action and reaction between the two, and, strictly speaking, they are both together, taken as one, the true system of God; for a system in the most proper and philosophic sense of the word is a complete and absolute whole which cannot be taken as a fraction or part of anything."[1]

That which Dr. Bushnell here calls "system" I call "kingdom." Nature, therefore, is simply the expression of an invisible spiritual kingdom which antedates it in time as it surpasses it in power.

II

It is this fact which the Scriptures affirm.

"Where wast thou," is God's appeal to Job out of the whirlwind, "when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . . When the morning

[1] *Nature and the Supernatural*, Bushnell, p. 19. Dickinson.

stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"[1]

Things did not jump into being at the fiat of God, but rather intelligent causes and powers were moved to work, and out of the Unseen kingdom came the Seen.

That the visible *is* a kingdom no one would deny. Its marvellous unity, which seems to bind all its processes and activities together; its beauty, of which we shall speak later; the laws by which it is governed—all give it the appearance of a well-ordered kingdom. If, then, it is the expression of an invisible something, that something must be a kingdom too.

It may perhaps be said that a solitary text from a poetical book of Scripture is too slight a foundation on which to build a theory of the universe, but the more carefully the whole tenor of Scripture is regarded the more it will be felt to bear out the words of the writer of the Book of Job. Throughout we are made to feel that the material is intimately connected with the spiritual, as an outward expression of inner forces.

And though it is hazardous for one without

[1] Job xxxviii. 7.

scientific knowledge to say positively what are the last conclusions of Science, I believe nothing has been discovered to shake the opinion stated some thirty years ago by the two eminent mathematicians Stewart and Tait in their book, *The Unseen Universe.* Drummond is probably quite right in quoting them to show that in the view of Science the visible world was evolved out of the invisible. It might have been thought, as he says, that the visible world was formed first as a kind of scaffolding on which the higher and spiritual should be afterwards raised; but, on the contrary, the exact opposite "has been the case. The first in the field was the spiritual world. Apart from the general proof of the Law of Continuity, the more special grounds of such a conclusion are, first, the fact insisted upon by Herschel and Clerk Maxwell that the atoms of which the visible universe is built up bear distinct marks of being manufactured articles; and secondly, the origin in time of the visible universe is implied from known facts with regard to the dissipation of energy." And if this is so, the natural laws we observe and investigate have not only their own earthly interest inasmuch as they show us how

we may work, but also an interest beyond that, inasmuch as they are expressions of spiritual laws prevailing throughout the invisible sphere, and are the "illimitable avenues leading us up to God." "The natural world, then, is an incarnation, a visible representation, a working model of the Kingdom of Heaven."[1]

Our Lord indicated this by taking the simple laws of growth and expansion as they could be observed in nature, and transferring them to the spiritual world. The whole of the parabolic teaching is founded on a certain likeness between the Seen and the Unseen. When Christ says the Kingdom of Heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed or leaven, He is asserting that the laws of the spiritual kingdom are like those of the earthly kingdom; that they are, as it were, "projected downwards"; that the whole universe is one whole, one kingdom. As Archbishop Trench says, "It is a great misunderstanding of the matter to think of them (*i.e.* the things of earth) as happily but yet arbitrarily chosen illustrations taken with a skilful selection from the great stock and store-

[1] *Nature Law in the Spiritual World*, by Henry Drummond, pp. 53-56, 1884 Ed. Hodder & Stoughton.

house of unappropriated images. Rather they belong to one another, the type to the thing typified, by an inward necessity; they were linked together long before by the law of secret affinity."[1] So the parables were a calling attention to "the spiritual facts which underlie all processes of nature, all institutions of human society, and which, though unseen, are the true ground and support of all."[2] That was the real position taken in Mr. Drummond's famous book *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, and it still holds good. It was his application of the truth that rightly met with serious criticism. For the law that obtains in the kingdoms of the vegetable and material worlds may demand a new expression in the spiritual kingdom where freedom reigns. The spiritual law in the natural world is one thing, but the natural law in the spiritual world quite another. It may then be true to say that the Kingdom of Heaven is not simply characterised by great moral principles, described by St. Paul as righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, but also by great scientific laws, as we call them—the laws of motion, gravitation, and

[1] *Notes on the Parables*, R. C. Trench, p. 13. [2] *Ibid.* p. 17.

measurement. These may have quite different expressions in a world where ideas of space and movement are altogether different from what they are here, but they may serve as links of association between life here and there, they may be as important factors in the identity of life, in the perpetuation of memory, as the possession of the resurrection body will be.

III

But it is time to ask what further indications does Holy Scripture afford as to the truth of these speculations. The Bible shows, as we saw in the last chapter, that this world has been subject to constant interferences and interventions from the world of spirits. Angels are often employed in various ministries to the children of men, sometimes warning, at other times guarding, at other times guiding. Their appearance always excited a shock, and those who saw them felt that they had looked into the other world. But the feature that specially interests us in that part of the subject that we are now considering is the association of these spirits with the elements of nature—

wind, water, fire. In one passage, the 104th Psalm, the writer describes the angels as taking the form of wind and fire; and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews uses this as an argument to teach us the superiority of Christ; for though the angels are spoken of as wind or fire, He only as the Son: "Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee."[1] It is of importance to notice here that the statement is taken out of poetry and made to support the truth of the divinity of Christ. No writer would do this unless he were sure that the words expressed a fact and that the readers of his letter accepted them as such. And in the last book of the Bible, St. John tells us that he saw the angels holding back the winds, as he saw other angels emptying vials upon the earth. We cannot, however, quote as having the same authority the passage in St. John where the healing waters of Bethesda are supposed to have their curative properties through the intervention of angels; but the early reception of the words shows us that the Christians of the subapostolic age were familiar with the thought.[2] Something might be urged in sup-

[1] Heb. i. 7. [2] St. John v. 4.

port of the same faith in the ministry of angels in relation to Nature from their presence at the Resurrection of Christ or at the judgment of Herod.[1] But tempting though it is, space does not allow us to do more than recall the mind to the fact that the Bible always assumes and sometimes states that Nature and angelic ministries are closely connected; that whilst there are great sweeping laws for each department of the life of the universe, "He hath given them a law which shall not be broken";[2] yet the laws are in the hands of far-sighted and obedient intelligences who are ever ministering to the needs of the race and the individuals that make it up. It shows us Nature not as a ring fence stoutly protected on all sides by high barriers, but as the very susceptible expression of a vast, limitless kingdom, the great gates of which are ever open day and night, and the varied mansions of which are full of innumerable beings of many degrees of consciousness, differing from that of the wind or fire to that of the highest human intelligence.

That was the feeling of the Jewish schools

[1] St. Matt. xxviii. 2. [2] Acts xii. 23.

of thought. Their scholars would "speak of an angel set over the earth, of another who is prince of the sea. Every element, every form of created life, had its angel counterpart." And our Lord, so far from discouraging it, emphasised, and enlarged, and defended it, as we have already noticed.

The spiritually-minded Jew could never look upon the world and this system of things in the way the deist of the eighteenth century did. It was not a sphere of material forces set going long, long ago by the Supreme Being and now revolving by the continuity of the impact that first gave it movement. "In fact, it is remarkable that the word 'nature,' in the sense we now use it in, never occurs in the Bible. Neither the word nor the thing as a separate entity seems ever to have been present to the Hebrew mind. In everything, they saw or heard God Himself as immediately present, ready, as it were, to rend the veil and manifest Himself."[1] And this Presence was never conceived of as being solitary, but as always attended by those wonderful beings that make up His Court. Perhaps no one but a Jew

[1] Shairp, *Poetic Interpretation of Nature.*

could have written the Benedicite, that earnest appeal to all the inanimate powers of the universe, as we think them to be, to praise the Lord and magnify His Name for ever. And the Christians expressed the same faith, so that the world was a place full of mystery and awe, and continually subject to the interference of strange supernatural agencies.

Some modern thinkers have gone as far to-day.

Fechner, as we have seen, conceived the whole earth itself to be a conscious being. His account of his discovery is worth quoting. "On a certain spring morning," says Fechner, "I went out to walk. The fields were green, the birds sang, the dew glistened, the smoke was rising, here and there a man appeared; a light of transfiguration lay on all things. It was only a little bit of earth; it was only one moment of her existence; and yet as my look embraced her more and more, it seemed to me not only so beautiful an idea, but so true and clear a fact that she is an angel . . . that I asked myself 'how the opinions of men could ever have so spun themselves away from life as to deem the earth only a

dry clod, and to seek for angels above it or about it in the emptiness of the sky, only to find them nowhere?'"[1] And this feeling about the earth was not unlike that of the poet-artist Blake about the sun. On being asked whether at sunrise he did not see a disc of fire something like a guinea, replied, "No, No, No. I see an innumerable company of the heavenly host crying, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.'" It may be said that these are exaggerated expressions of spiritual mystics, but teachers like Dr. Newman, who have been trained to reason closely and write with great self-restraint, have said much the same. In a beautiful sermon written in the opening of spring, he voices the general feeling of Christians in saying, "The earth that we see does not satisfy us . . . we know much more lies hid in it than we see. What we see is the outward shell of an eternal kingdom, and on that kingdom we fix the eyes of our faith. . . . Bright as is the sun and sky and the clouds, green as are the leaves and the fields, sweet as is the singing of the birds, we know that they are not all, and we will not take up

[1] *Hibbert Journal.*

with a part for the whole. They proceed from a centre of love and goodness, which is God Himself, but they are not His fulness; they speak of heaven, but they are not heaven. They are but as stray beams and dim reflections of His image; they are but crumbs from the table. We are looking for the coming of the day of God, when all this outward world, fair though it be, shall perish. . . . We can bear the loss, for we know it will be but the removing of the veil. We know that to remove the world which is seen will be the manifestation of the world which is not seen. We know that what we see is as a screen hiding from us God and Christ and His saints and angels, and we earnestly desire and pray for the dissolution of all that we see, from our longing after that which we do not see." And what he says in beautiful prose, John Milton puts more shortly in felicitous poetry—

> "What if earth
> Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein
> Each to other like more than on earth is thought?"

An objection, however, may be raised here that this thought of an inner kingdom of spiritual beings within the outer kingdom of

nature is driving God back from the world from which the doctrine of Divine Immanence, so much insisted upon by spiritual thinkers of to-day, has brought Him, and that we shall be back in the deistic position, affirming that God views His world from afar and governs it by created agents. We need no one between God and our own souls. We like to feel the touch of God close and intimate. But the view that we get nearer to God, if we have no one between Him and ourselves is radically false and contrary to spiritual experience. As a matter of fact, do we feel nearer to God when enclosed in a bare, empty prison cell, where there is nothing between us and God, than in a beautiful cathedral with a large congregation of devout worshippers? The very opposite, as we know, is the case. God is not more immanent in those parts of the world where there are no Christians, but less. And if sinful human beings may help to bring God near to us, surely the proximity of pure spirits ceaselessly doing His will must bring to men a livelier and fuller sense of His presence.

Again, when we speak of the Divine Immanence, of God as the indwelling Spirit

of the universe, there is nothing necessarily contradictory to the thought of the presence of other spirits created by Him being within the same universe. Even man by his spirit can indwell a piece of music, so that we say that it is a bit of himself; and yet the player who expresses it on piano or violin also indwells it. But, so far from the instrumentalist making the presence of the composer less obvious, he makes it the more clear. We ourselves do that which we do through others. The angels, if contemplated by faith, whether as assisting us in worship, ministering to us in difficulties, or revealing to us the beauty and order of Nature, bring us nearer to God and make known His Presence.

IV

But we now ask whether this view of the relation of the Kingdom of Heaven to nature gives any added force to the meaning of the words, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." In the first place, we know that the Incarnation necessarily meant a new relation of Christ to nature. He took it into union with Himself, endowed Himself with it, became it. The

Kingdom of Heaven, then, in Christ was at hand as it had never been before. "In the Incarnate Christ the whole world of spirit was potentially upon the earth, so that the flowing and ebbing of such life was continually from Him and to Him." That was the nature of the promise to Nathanael. Having discovered the King of kings in spite of His earthly disguise, he would be enabled to see even greater things —the heaven opened and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. His quickened spiritual insight would be able to see Christ as the centre of a spiritual kingdom, issuing His commands here or there according to His pleasure.[1] Things were certain to happen which had never happened before. The Kingdom would naturally express itself.

What we call "miracles" were bound to happen, for here was One who was King of the invisible world and yet a member of the visible. He stood between the Seen and Unseen, with a hand on each. And unless He did things which had never been done before—healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead—there would have been no help for

[1] St. John i. 51.

those who, though slowly coming to believe in His divine personality as Son of God, needed guidance to get over the difficulty His suffering Humanity created. "He claimed to be superhuman, and the claim required substantiation to gain a hearing. Attention had to be arrested; expectation had to be aroused; the advent of a new era had to be emphasised, and that in an age and among a people that was ready to accept miracles, and therefore to whom miracles were a natural—not to say inevitable—mode of address."[1] If a spiritual kingdom was in their very midst, then there ought to be signs of it, and these signs would naturally be of a startling character. For it was just this sense of the nearness of an invisible spiritual kingdom that God's chosen people had to a great extent lost. They were immersed in their devotion to the outward, and its claims whether in public worship or private life were so exacting that they never had time to consider what its real meaning was. Nature had lost its power of appeal; the continuous silent witness of the recurring seasons —the sunshine, the storm, the stars—had lost its

[1] *The Divine Immanence*, Illingworth, p. 66. Paper Ed. Macmillan.

power. So the Kingdom of Heaven, in the new and surprising intimacy it had with the world through the Incarnation of its King, needed a fresh testimony, and this testimony was given in the miracles.

Some will, however, urge that there is no occasion to find any special place for miracles, as recent experiments in psychological science show that they are not outside natural law. "They are instances," they say, "of the working of certain laws of nature whose existence has not been hitherto suspected, and which come into operation only under certain conditions. Wherever these special conditions arise, these laws will certainly prevail, and like effects will be observed." The science of psychology is at present only in its infancy, and when we know more of its laws and of the strange power that mind exercises over matter we shall see that our Lord only did perfectly what, though imperfectly, every highly gifted nature may with faith do. Christian Science and spiritual healing are revealing to us the presence of mighty powers lying untouched at our very doors, of psychic and spiritual forces as yet latent in human nature of which we know not whereunto the

future development may reach.[1] According to this conception, the coming of the kingdom was only a revelation of the powers that lie in things as they are. Miracles are only the expressions of Nature quickened to new possibilities through the advent of the King. There is no movement from without.

But, as has been pointed out by a recent medical writer in the *Hibbert Journal*, our Lord's miracles are not of the kind that can be cured by "moral impression."[2] Even the cases of possession which are mentioned are not susceptible of healing in this way. The demoniacs described are the subjects which lend themselves least of all to the modern remedial measures of hypnotism and suggestion. The paralytics, the lame, the blind, the lepers, are not susceptible of cure by suggestion, emotional shock, hypnotism. No well-attested case of the healing of organic disease has been cited. And, in spite of the boasts of Christian Science, death still keeps its victims. The calming of the storm, the multiplication of bread for the starving multitude, the blasting of the fig tree remain as

[1] See *Supernatural and Christ*, Bishop of Ossory.

[2] "The Neurotic Theory of the Miracles of Healing," by R. J. Ryle, M.D., *Hibbert Journal*, April 1907.

unique evidence that the power of Christ is not merely different in magnitude from that of the most spiritual and powerful faith healer, but different altogether in character. Even the writer of the *Encyclopædia Biblica* admits that the healing ministry, judged by critical tests, stands on as firm historical ground as the best-accredited parts of the teachings.[1]

The miracles of Christ, then, are signs, as our Lord Himself said, that the Kingdom of Heaven had come upon men. And they are just the signs we should expect. For they always bear witness to an underlying order and harmony. In some cases, as in the healing of lepers, they not only remove the ravages of disease, but bring the sufferer into harmony with the laws of health; in others, as in cure of the lame and the blind, they restore wholeness; in other cases, as in the raising of the dead, they renew fellowship. They stand for a hidden Order of Righteousness, Peace, and Love. There is never any attempt to merely excite wonder—our Lord had already in the wilderness rejected that temptation. On the contrary, they were assurances for those who

[1] *Encyclopædia Biblica*, Art. "Jesus," viii.

had eyes to see, that deformity, disease, death were really due to the spirits of disorder and unrighteousness, and that loving hands were at work repairing the mischief sin had brought into the world.

But it may be asked why, if the Kingdom of Heaven is amongst us—is indeed at hand to-day as never before, for it has a stronger and wider power over mankind as a whole—why are there no miracles now? Is there not the same need to-day that men should be reminded of the presence and nearness of a spiritual realm as there was in the first century? In the first place, it must not be admitted that miracles are discontinued. It is true they are not of the same kind as the miracles of Christ. As long as He was on the earth grace and healing streamed forth from Him, and even after His ascension to heaven many wonderful works were done in His Name. But not universally, not without strange limitations. Perhaps of all men no one surpassed St. Paul in faith, and no one ever wrought more startling cures; but the malicious retort, "Physician, heal thyself," might have been flung back upon him, for he was a continual sufferer, sometimes apparently

straitened in his work by the "thorn in the flesh" which troubled him. He could not cure himself, and there is no reason to believe that he felt he ought to be able to heal every one. He writes of the recovery of Epaphroditus as though it came about without any miraculous power[1] and, so far from regarding medical skill with contempt, he refers with affection to his own friend St. Luke as the "beloved doctor."[2] There was not the sharp distinction then between miracles of healing and medical cures that some would wish to establish to-day. There is no reason for believing that St. Luke gave up his medical work when he became a Christian; on the contrary, the opinion that he became St. Paul's close companion because he was so anxious to minister to his many infirmities is reasonable and natural. Oil, one of the few remedies in those days that could be used without harm, was commanded by our Lord and the Apostles to be used, and was doubtless used in a curative way, with such blessing as was customary.[3] In itself it was powerless, as all

[1] Phil. ii. 26. 27. [2] Col. iv. 14.
[3] St. Mark vi. 13; St. Jas. v. 14.

medicine is; but when used in the Name of Christ, with prayer and faith, it would work much blessing. The continuance of the miracles of our Lord was to some extent abridged even in the apostolic times; and as the witness to the Kingdom of Heaven was borne in many other ways by other means, this particular testimony was the less necessary. Circumstances, however, may arise, and do arise, as in the mission field, where the kingdom of darkness is strongly lodged and the faith and intelligence of the people at a low ebb as it was at Lystra, and then we find the old witness again appearing—as, for example, in the experience of Pastor Hsi, an experience that doubtless has many parallels.

But in the criticism of the discontinuance of miracles the new testimony to the Kingdom of Heaven which Science supplies has been forgotten. Could St. Luke witness one of the major operations in a great modern hospital, his surprise would probably be as great as that which was excited by the healing of Publius' father by St. Paul. We are so much at home with our wonders that we fail to see their startling significance. The discovery of

some great law like that of the circulation of the blood or gravitation is a revelation of the mysteries of the kingdom. These are only a few of the secrets which the patient investigator has yet to discover. So too the fresh knowledge which the kingdom has yielded of such powers as steam and electricity has revolutionised life. Even the wonders of the apostolic age are not so surprising as those we witness to-day. Miracles are not therefore needed when printing brings afresh into every home some new account of the marvellous works of God. And two points are worthy of attention in this regard. In the first place, these discoveries have been made within the Body of Christ. Heathen lands have yielded little or nothing of scientific discovery. It may be that in some cases, though not so many as have been supposed, the particular discoverer has had no clear knowledge of the Faith, but in the Body of Christ the individual is nothing. The bad priest is no hindrance to the saving efficacy of the Sacraments; the unbelieving doctor is no hindrance to the blessing his skill or diagnosis may bring; the discoverer's lack of faith has not prevented his being an

instrument of the Kingdom of Heaven for the accomplishment of its glorious designs. It is for the sake of the Body, not the individual, that the discoveries are made. And as the Body rises in faith and self-control, so also in insight of the powers the Kingdom of Heaven has to disclose. The centuries distinguished by spiritual faith may be found to be the periods marked by scientific discovery. As man's grasp exceeds the finite, so his mind is stirred to see what he never saw before. A glance at some of the dates of the great discoveries is significant. Some may feel that it was the fresh insight which the Church gained through the Reformation into the principles of the Kingdom of Heaven that led to her knowledge of some of the great laws which it was expressing in nature. In 1517 the Reformation began, in 1526 Tyndale's New Testament was published, in 1535 Coverdale's Bible, and in 1543 the Copernican system was published, which revolutionised men's knowledge of the Universe. In 1611 there followed the first publication of the Authorised Version, and eight years later Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood, and thirty years later Newton was born. Our

Lord had promised that if we seek the Kingdom of Heaven all the real needs of our physical life would be supplied, and it seems as though a spiritual awakening has been followed by an increased knowledge of the beauty of the mysterious laws of the kingdom. In these ways, then, the Kingdom of Heaven has been seen to be at hand, flashing forth its light and revealing its powers as the spiritual susceptibilities of men enabled them to take them in.

V

But not only through Science but also through a revelation of beauty has the Kingdom of Heaven been revealed. "The complicated mechanism of Nature, which Science investigates and formulates into physical law, is not the whole; it is but the case or outer shell of something greater and better than itself. Through the mechanism and above it, interpenetrating it, within it and beyond it, there lie existences which Science has not yet formulated—probably never can formulate—a supersensible world which to the soul is more real and of higher import than

any which the senses reveal. It is apprehended by other faculties than those through which Science works, yet it is in no ways opposed to Science, but in perfect harmony with it while transcending it."[1] It is this of which the beauty of nature reminds us. Why it is that we are stirred to emotion by a glorious sunset, a great stretch of wood, meadow, and stream, a mountain range of peak after peak, it is impossible to say. So far as we know, human beings are alone susceptible to it; the dog and the horse have no perception of it. For them the flowers, streams, and hills mean nothing beyond a place for hunting or exercise. There is something within us that corresponds with something without. It is not mere shape or colour that so affects us. Our thoughts and feelings are carried away from the natural and physical appearances till we find ourselves communing with something akin to our own spirits though higher and vaster. The beauty which comes to us through eye, ear, and imagination we feel to belong to an unseen order of which we are a part. We are in touch with the vast spiritual kingdom. The sense of beauty which is

[1] Shairp's *Interpretation of Nature*, p. 75.

deepened as we grow in maturity and serenity of soul is a witness that the Kingdom of Heaven is in our midst.

It would be interesting, if there were opportunity, to try and discover at what times this sense of nature as the expression of a spiritual Kingdom has been most deep, what causes have been at work to produce or develop it. Periods there are when it is hardly perceived. Man is so engrossed in material, social, and mental interests that nature seems only a machine for grinding out the matter that he needs for his body. He is not then at his best. There will be no revelation. When, however, the Kingdom of God comes as it did in the overthrow of Jerusalem, as it did in the destruction of Constantinople, as it did in the great French Revolution, then it suffers violence and the violent take it by force. There is a passionate endeavour made by those who are passing through the great tribulation to enter the kingdom. And it has been well said that the more society is disturbed and agonised the more rich and profound nature becomes—"mysteriously eloquent for the one who comes to her from out the ardent and tumultuous centre of

civilisation."[1] So St. John, moved as he must have been by all that he had heard of the destruction of Jerusalem, finds in the spiritual kingdom of which nature was the outward expression the solace of his spirit; and those who in our modern days had had their fevered pulses stimulated almost to madness by the throes that preceded or accompanied the French Revolution, turned instinctively, as Principal Shairp notes, to find repose in the eternal freshness that is in the outer world. Wordsworth was only the first of a long list of poets who, smitten to the core with the contagion of their time, have found sympathy from communion with the spirit that is felt in nature.

But one objection that has doubtless been felt throughout this chapter must be faced before we conclude. If nature be an expression of the Kingdom of Heaven, then what do those parts of it mean which preach another message than that of order and beauty. "It is well for us," as Mr. Ruskin says, "to dwell with thanksgiving on the unfolding of the flower and the falling of the dew, and the sleep of the green

[1] Vinet, quoted by Shairp, *Interpretation of Nature*, p. 226.

fields in the sunshine; but the blasted trunk, the barren rock, the moaning of the bleak winds, the roar of the black perilous whirlpools of the mountain streams, the solemn solitude of moors and seas, the continual fading of all beauty into darkness and of all strength into dust," seem to have another and different truth to proclaim. "The good succeeds to the evil as day succeeds to night, but also the evil to the good. Gerizim and Ebal, birth and death, light and darkness, heaven and hell, divide the existence of man and his futurity."[1]

So too in the kingdom of life "disgusting and loathsome objects appear too numerous to be recounted, such as worms and the myriads of base vermin, deformed animals, dwarfs, idiots, leprosies, and the rot of the cities swept by the plague; history itself depicting the mushrooms sprouting in the bodies of the unburied dead and the jackals howling in the chambers at their dreadful repast."[2] And it is no sufficient explanation to say that these are the direct consequences of man's rebellion. For it would

[1] Ruskin, *Stones of Venice*, iii. pp. 138, 139.

[2] Bushnell, *The Natural and the Supernatural*, p. 129.

appear that long before human life was seen upon the earth there were strange, hideous, uncouth forms, barren deserts swept by howling winds, awful chasms and precipices mantled with black clouds, and creatures not only living by the death of their neighbours but armed at all points to destroy them.

This fair kingdom of harmony and loveliness which we believe stands behind all nature, of which nature is the expression, seems to be mocked by the gloom, the ugliness, and the deformity which have their place in its outward expression. There are, however, two things to be said in answer. The Bible from the very outset assumes a kingdom of darkness as opposed to the kingdom of light. The serpent is already waiting his opportunity. Our first parents find the Tempter lurking in the shades of the garden, and St. John tells us that when the powers of evil were expelled from the heavenly sphere they were allowed to have a temporary resting-place on our planet.[1] Some have thought that the boast that Satan makes to Christ that he had authority given him over this world was not an idle or lying one, but

[1] Apocalypse, xii. 12.

refers to a Divine permission given either before or after his fall.[1] Whether this be so, Scripture, as I have said, implies his presence even before man appears. If, as we know, the evil spirits have a special delight in perverting the good and destroying the beautiful; if their life, like that of wicked men and women, finds a joy in mischief, then it may be that their hideous malice may have left its mark in the deformities and ugliness in which the world abounds. But why did not the Kingdom of God prevent this? Why should not its own beautiful work be spoiled and injured? We are here entering on very difficult ground, but it is not improbable that if this earth were intended to be the scene of such indescribably great actions as the rebellion of man against the Eternal, and the Incarnation and Passion of God, then even its outward characteristics would show some signs of anticipation.

"Premeditation prior to creation" is the fact which Mr. Agassiz declares to be impressed upon nature. "The Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" expresses,

[1] St. Luke iv. 6, and Godet's *Studies of the Old Testament —The Angels.*

what of course we must assume, that the sin and rebellion of man had a place in the Eternal mind before a blade of grass appeared, before life in its most elementary form existed. As Dr. Bushnell says, "It is the peculiar distinction of consequences mediated by intelligence that they generally go before and prepare the coming of events to which they relate. Whoever plants a state erects a prison, or makes the prison to be a necessary part of his plan, which prison, though it be erected before any case of felony occurs, is just as truly a consequence of the felonies to be as if it were erected afterward or were a natural result of such felonies. All the machinery of discipline in a school or army is prepared by intelligence, perceiving beforehand the certain want of discipline hereafter to appear, and is just as truly a consequence of the want as if it were created by the want itself, without any mediation of intelligence."[1] So the All-Wise, clearly forseeing man's sin and rebellion, and knowing how impressed he would be by the outward form nature took on, allowed these abnormal and hideous expressions to find a place in His

[1] *Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 135.

beautiful kingdom that man might learn the horrors of sin. When we recollect how much we have learned through poets and teachers of the consequences of wrong-doing by the abundant illustrations they found ready to hand in Nature itself, we feel thankful for their help. And when we realise how small a part of Nature is disfigured by ugliness and deformity, how its aspect generally is fair and beautiful, we may be thankful for this fresh witness that "where sin abounded, grace did abound more exceedingly."[1]

But this adaptability of Nature to the history of man is exhibited not only in its darker and uglier features, but in its ability to respond at certain crises in the history of nations or the individual, as when the Crucifixion was shrouded in darkness and followed by earthquake. History supplies such countless illustrations of the fact of this sensitiveness of Nature to the outward fortunes of man that men seem to anticipate in certain atmospheric conditions that something will happen. But all this St. Paul has implied in the well-known passage of the travail of Nature. Creation,

[1] Rom. v. 20.

he writes, in his letter to the Romans, was not subjected to vanity of its own will.[1] It protested against the hideous presence of death, but bowed to the will of Him who subjected it in the hope that something better would take place. And this better thing was its future deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty that belongs to the children of God. A day would arise when all that spoils its fair beauty and order would be gone, and Nature would be a perfectly free expression of the Kingdom of Heaven. As it is, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, like some mother awaiting and expecting her first-born. She is filled with a great hope, but it is not yet consummated. And it is consistent with this that man too shares her burden, he too longs for a freedom from the limitations and deformities that have marked his progress. As Nature looks forward to a time when she will be perfectly beautiful, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, so too man rejoices in the thought of the redemption of the body from weakness and sin.

[1] Rom. viii. 20.

"The best is yet to be!
The last of life for which the first was made:
Our times are in His Hand
Who saith, 'A whole I planned.'
Youth shows but half; trust God; see all
Nor be afraid!"

CHAPTER IV

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AND THE STATE

I

THE question we approach in this chapter is even more difficult than that which we discussed in the last. The relation of the Kingdom of Heaven to that of Nature was simple in this respect, that Nature, though groaning and travailing, and waiting for her redemption, is subject to the great laws which prevail through the universe. Man is not. Possessing freedom, he can contradict and oppose the influence the Kingdom of Heaven is always exercising over him. He can break its laws, give opportunity to the kingdom of darkness, and actually take sides against the armies of God. It is the disorder and disarrangement that is produced by millions of free wills that makes the problem so difficult.

On the one hand there is an ordered host of perfect moral beings, expressing the principles of righteousness, joy, and peace, which are the essential characteristics of the kingdom, and on the other hand there are numberless free wills asserting themselves in a thousand different ways, which have to be brought, without coercion, to the acceptance of the King's laws.

Happily there is an innate tendency in human beings to act together, and this has been strengthened by the natural ties of blood. So out of the family sprang the tribe, and out of the tribe the nation. What particular influence the spiritual kingdom has exercised in these drawings together it is not easy to say. But the learned Dr. Martensen, arguing from the LXX of Deut. xxxii. 8, 9, where God is spoken of as taking up His abode in Israel, but "setting the bounds of the heathen according to the number of the angels," considers that the passage warrants us in supposing that the tribal and national life of the heathen has never been left to itself, but penetrated by divine ideas, which ideas are living powers and active spirits. In his opinion, he is but a very

superficial thinker who can recognise in the spirit of a people nothing more than a mere personification, a mere generic expression for the aims and aspirations of individuals, and he therefore considers that not only are the divine ideas that are expressed in tribal and national life, living powers and active spirits, but that even "the deities of mythology may be regarded as the ministering spirits of that Providence which preserves the human race from sinking into an utterly unspiritual state."[1]

It is in this light that we are to regard such expressions as the "Prince of Persia," the "Prince of Grecia," and the "Angels of the Churches,"—Churches as well as Nations having expressions in the spiritual order, which are more than mere personifications, even personal beings who can be withstood or rebuked.[2]

These indications of the influence of the spiritual kingdom over the earthly kingdoms are slight, but full of interest, and help us to understand a little more clearly why, in spite of millions of varied and contradicting wills, history has taken that uniform course of

[1] Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, p. 128.
[2] Dan. x. 13–20; Rev. i. 20.

progress which is perhaps the best witness to divine government we have. Why should the history of mankind, split up as it is into countless divisions, go forward in a straight line? It was not to be expected. "Nations are as wayward and eccentric as men, and as liable to heroic or fiendish impulse." Left to themselves there would be no progress at all, only a story of successive conflicts without any meaning. There would be no such thing as history, no trace of a plan where we can see a fixed order and a course of events leading to a great issue. And not only do national panics or enthusiasms disturb the even record, but "accidents, too, mere accidents—the bullet which struck Gustavus on the field of Lutzen, the chance by which the Prussians missed Napoleon in the churchyard of Eylan, the chance which stopped Louis XVI. in his flight at Varennes, and carried him back to the guillotine,—turn the course of history as well as life, and baffle to that extent all law, all tendency and provision."[1] And yet history shows a certain moral order and progress. There is a divinity that shapes

[1] *Four Lectures on History*, iii. "Influences on Nations." Goldwin Smith.

the ends of peoples, as well as individuals, "rough hew them how we will." He in His wisdom chooses to work through countless unseen beings, who, singly or together, are at His word guiding the destinies of nations.

II

But not only in the guidance of history do we see the work of the Kingdom of Heaven, but also in that gradual building up of order, justice, consideration for others, which we speak of under the name of "civilisation." Though civilisation is greatly indebted, more indeed than we can rightly tell, to the Christian religion, yet it has grown up in countries like Egypt and India, in empires like Rome and Assyria long before Christ came. Of course it might be said that its gifts are due to the unaided powers of mankind; that the thought of philosophy, the genius of poetry, the grandeur of tragedy, and the beauty of art and sculpture are man's own creations, for which he can take unlimited credit: that "the progressive refinement of human nature, the deep, strong sense of justice, as justice,

the power of ruling firmly, equitably, and incorruptly, the genius and aptitude for law as a really governing power in society,"[1] are proofs of that inherent divine capacity for great things that lies in human nature. And there is much to be said for the view that man, having come from God, has within him extraordinary gifts and powers.

The Bible, however, whilst acknowledging and confessing man's greatness, that he is made but "a little less than God,"[2] does more than recognise his limitations, asserting that with all he has, he is apart from God's guidance and help as nothing; nay, that he is not only weak, but sinful and erring. That is the view of Holy Scripture, and it is consistent with this that nationally, as well as individually, man is held responsible for his actions, because though he is weak, he may be strong; though ignorant, he may be wise; for God is behind him, always helping and strengthening. So Babylon, Tyre, Philistia, and Moab are all judged as Israel is judged. They are supposed to have had guidance and

[1] *Gifts of Civilisation*, R. W. Church, pp. 18, 19.
[2] Ps. viii. 5.

resisted it, and therefore they are punished. They have forgotten that they are under the moral government of God. The lesson that was taught Nebuchadnezzar is the lesson they all must learn, that their kingdoms are only sure unto them when they have known "that the heavens do rule." When they are lifted up, and ascribe, as he did, their own achievements to themselves, then judgment falls, and in their punishment they recognise that the "Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will."[1]

That "the heavens do rule" is also the explanation of the spiritual beauty that has marked so much of the old religious systems, such as Buddhism and Confucianism. We have not always been prepared to recognise this. In our loyalty to the Christian faith we have been disposed to think that they are either simply the expression of human efforts to find God or the deceitful delusions of the Evil one. But may they not be the results of that pressure of the divine kingdom of ideas by which the Blessed Spirit is ever seeking to

[1] Dan. iv. 26.

make His wisdom known unto men? Is it not more reasonable and just to believe that though it is true that compared with the Christian faith they are seen to be poor broken lights, yet compared with the darkness of the lives they have illuminated they are seen to be rays of the Kingdom of Light, which was even then going forward to the glorious dawn. As Israel had its time of preparation for the light of the Gospel, so the nations of the world have been under training for the Gospel which is now being preached to them. And it would be well if those who go out to teach were to make such a careful study of the religions of the people whom they seek to convert to Christianity as to be able to use some of the old heathen stones for the upbuilding of the new kingdom. If we may judge from St. Paul's sermon to the Athenians, this was the attitude he himself adopted. He takes what he finds, and upon the truth that is in it builds up the Christian faith.

It may be said that this does not represent the main tendency of the times, which is rather to point to the great achievements in thought and work as showing that Christianity has not

the importance we think it has, of being a world-wide religion. See, men say, what those heathen did in their buildings, their government, their art, their writings! Could Christianity with that material have done much better? And for this life, considering the age in which they played their part, they did astonishingly well, obeying, as we believe, the motives and impulses which were ever behind them, urging them forward. But, as Dean Church reminds us, when we feel dizzy with what past or present history shows us of the magnitude and variety of these gifts of civilisation; when we begin to get satisfied with the broader work of the Kingdom of Heaven ceaselessly active everywhere, and careless about learning whether it has ever come nearer; we have only to think of its limitations, of the darkness and insoluble mystery that always remained over the great future that lies beyond death; of the sins, the degradation which gave the lie to its apparent progress, and then we realise that it only mocks us by its presence unless it lead to something further.[1] There is enough to make us cry out for more. Man has advanced so much

[1] *The Gifts of Civilisation*, R. W. Church, p. 29.

that it is impossible but that God will carry him further. And so, not only in Judæa, but throughout the world, there was a yearning for a revelation of that kingdom which is felt but not discovered, for a King who should reign in righteousness, take up the work as He finds it, and make of the silent efforts of the Kingdom of Heaven a new kingdom.

III

The announcement then, that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand was not only good news for the people of Palestine, but for the whole world. For centuries the work of preparation had been going on, but now in the presence of the King it was to receive a new impulse. Henceforth it would work not only as it had done in the shaping of history and the creation and development of religious and moral ideas, but more directly and specially through a kingdom of its own. The presence of the King upon the earth, who had become incarnate and taken humanity to Himself, opened out wonderful possibilities.

And it was only natural that the expectation

of men as to its direction should follow the lines with which history had made them familiar. Kingdoms had always come in one way, by force and outward power. And the prophecy of Daniel, which had so clearly announced the advent of the victorious kingdom, had not given any indication as to a different kind of coming. Everywhere, amongst the spiritually-minded as well as the carnal Jews, there was expectation of an outward judgment in which the good would be separated from the bad, and a feeling that this would be followed by some terrible catastrophe in which the kingdoms of this world would be crushed to dust.

Even the Baptist who preached the coming of the kingdom, expected this. Judgment was to begin at once. The axe was to be laid to the root of the tree, and every tree that brought not forth good fruit was to be hewn down and cast into the fire—the wheat was to be gathered into the garner, and the chaff to be burned with unquenchable fire.[1] It was a poetical way of describing some great political catastrophe. Pilate and Herod, the

[1] St. Matt. iii. 10.

Pharisees, Sadducees, and all who were proud and mighty, would, in the words of the Lord's Mother, be hurled from their seats, and "scattered in the imagination of their hearts."[1]

It is difficult to see how any other expectation could have been formed, and yet, as we know, it was a profound mistake. The King announced indeed the coming of the kingdom, and sent His disciples to preach it. But no outward step was taken that was likely to inaugurate a Reformation or Revolution. Of the great Leader it could be truly said, He neither "strove nor cried." His work was comparatively silent, confined to teaching and healing. We remember the disappointment the Baptist felt. All his prophecies of what would happen seemed to be falsified,—no trees cut down, no separation of the bad from good. His disciples shared his dejection; so he sent them to the Christ with the plain question, "Art Thou the Messiah, or do we look for another?" And the answer was direct and simple. "Go show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the

[1] St. Luke i. 51–52.

deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them; and blessed is he whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in Me."[1]

That was the manner of the coming of the kingdom; the relief of suffering, and the evangelisation of the poor. It was difficult for the Baptist, with a thousand years of national expectation behind him, to understand it, and it may have been this lack of spiritual insight that led our Lord to temper the highest praise He ever gave to man—"Verily I say unto you, among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist"; with the words, "notwithstanding he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he"[2]—implying that even he who understands but little of the mysteries of the kingdom, knows more than he who is still blind to the manner in which it will be brought in.

The answer was confirmed by all that is told us of His attitude towards political and social reform. The abuses of His own time, slavery, oppression, cruelty, and injustice, were worse than those of our own, and He was of

[1] St. Matt. xi. 4, 5. [2] St. Matt. xi. 11.

course fully conscious of them, as we learn from His parables and sermons, but He never attacks them directly, never forms any society to attack them.

His manner of dealing with wrong oppression is always from within, never from without. It is this that explains His comparative indifference to the pressing questions of the day. No subject was more discussed than that of the tribute money. Was it right for the citizens of a spiritual kingdom to pay taxes to Cæsar? His reply gives no answer. He refers them to a question of fact. What coinage are they using? Whose image does it bear? Cæsar's. Well, render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's.[1]

Again, some one proposes that He should adjudicate a question of property, but He answers, "Who made Me a judge, a divider over you? Beware of covetousness."[2]

He must have abhorred human slavery, and yet, though he heals the centurion's slave, He does not bid the master release him.

Sadducees and Pharisees alike would have been glad had He sided with them, but He

[1] St. Matt. xxii. 21. [2] St. Luke xii. 14, 15.

not only kept aloof from all parties, but bade His disciples beware of their influence. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."[1] He shows no dislike of the rich, for He dines with them as with the poor, and heals their children and servants with the same loving generosity that characterised His ministry to the needy. His attitude towards the people was equally disinterested. On one occasion they would have gladly made Him King, and followed Him in any path of reform He chose to inaugurate, but He dismissed them and went apart into a mountain to pray. Yet on another, he invites their attention, and actually publicly proclaimed Himself as King, allowing His disciples to greet Him as such and to acclaim the blessedness of the kingdom He seemed about to inaugurate; but later in the same week, when asked whether he was a King, whilst admitting it, He declared it was a kingdom not of this world but of another order altogether.

Such, then, was the relation of this King of the new Kingdom to the kingdoms of the world. At first it looks like one of aloofness,

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 6.

or as some would say who regard Him simply as man, as due to want of knowledge. So a modern critic: "The production and distribution of wealth, the disposition of power, the laws that regulate labour, property, trade, these were matters as remote from His interests as they were beyond His comprehension. Never was man better equipped to inspire a religious sect, never one worse to found or direct a commonwealth."[1] But a closer view shows us that He emphasises [illegible] those things which are of real importance from whom [illegible] He saw what the Chinese critic, important, that [illegible] have quoted, recognises as all family, and that [illegible] the State depends upon the children, and of c[illegible] if the duties of parents to to wives, and c[illegible]ildren to parents, of husbands perfectly carried ou[illegible] wives to husbands were government. In [illegible] nations could get on without largely to this very [illegible]hina it is the boast that family, itself a little [illegible] thing, the institution of the economic unit—gov[illegible] state—a political, social, and sary.[2] "The comma[illegible]ernment is almost unneces- and thy mother,' w[illegible]ndment, 'Honour thy father [illegible]rites Sir Robert Hart, "is

[1] *Letters from a Chines[illegible]* *Official*, pp. 57, 58. [2] *Ibid.* p. 41.

the keynote of their family, social, official, and national life, and because it is so, their days are long in the land God has given them." Now it is just this commandment our Lord lays so much stress on, both by His example of thirty years obedience to it, and by the teaching He gives about it. He recalls men's thoughts to it, warns them against disobedience of it, and gives it His benediction. The sacredness and indissolubility of marriage, the care of children for their parents, the love of man to man, even though he be an enemy, are now felt to be the pillars of the State, and it is on these He insists. Indifference to forms of government, to measures of social reform, only meant that these were second and other things first.

But if our point of view is correct, it would be a mistake to suppose that Christ believed as the Chinaman does, that observance of family duties would of itself bring about the great changes in the State that He desired. Jesus believed that God was the real creator of the kingdom. It was not to be set up by man-made evolution. "It is one of the axioms of religious faith to believe that."[1]

[1] *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, Rauschenbusch, p. 63.

He knew that divine powers and intelligences were at work. He was not speaking of an ideal or Utopian State which had no existence, but of one actually in being, and seeking to express itself in a human society. All that He spoke of, He saw in the Kingdom of Light of which He was the Prince. His desire was that this spiritual kingdom should be established on the earth, should come there, as it had already come in heaven. The difficulty was, that by its own nature it could not force itself on unwilling subjects, it could not betray its own principles, and work on the lines of earthly kingdoms, it must remain unknown and unseen, it must work humbly, obediently, and unobtrusively, not coming with observation or outward pomp or show.

Still, in the Church our Lord had prepared for it just that body which could become its instrument. There, membership was irrespective of rank or sex. Authority was not in hereditary offices, but in those open to the lowliest. Love to the King and to one another was the one bond of fellowship. Humility and obedience were asserted as all-important principles. It seemed then that the Church could express in human

form those great features in which the Kingdom of Heaven differed from all other kingdoms.

IV

But the more it grew in size and power, the more easy it was to forget the example the King Himself had shown, and the words which had illustrated His own attitude. For some time it was saved from pride and arrogancy by the presence on all sides of it of a hostile, persecuting world; but as it grew in importance, men forgat the unseen in their devotion to the visible. The Church came to be regarded as the divine kingdom itself, instead of being the expression of an unseen one, and its relation to the State became every year more difficult.

And the difficulties increased as the Roman world became Christian. Emperors and rulers were made by Baptism members of the Kingdom of God upon earth, and the State became, as it were, a department of the Church. But it had inherited great traditions of independence, and it was not inclined to be merged in the life of the Church, nor was it possible that the Church should become merged in the life of

the State. Two rival authorities grew up in the same divine society, the one secular, the other sacred, and the position became still further embarrassed by the ever-increasing property of the Church, the management of which the Church kept in her own hands. A serious collision of two great ideals was inevitable—one that of Christian rulers exercising ultimate authority, but leaving the authority of the Church undisturbed; and that of an ideal Church exercising ultimate authority, but leaving the authority of the State undisturbed. This was forced on through the gradual transference of all spiritual authority to the Pope, who thus became a rival to the Emperor. As the Vicar of Christ on earth, he naturally became the Viceroy of the earthly Kingdom of God, and the State was simply a department of the Church, to be directed or governed with as much or little liberty as was thought good. The Apostolic idea of the Kingdom, as expressed by Christ, was of course by this time helplessly confused; almost every characteristic principle was lost. Those who read the New Testament were unable to recognise the attitude of Christ to human

society, in the pomp, tyranny, and pride of the Church of the Middle Ages. It was pre-eminently a kingdom of this world, as Christ's was pre-eminently "not from hence."

In looking back, it is not easy to see how this perversion of the kingdom could have been prevented, except by keeping strictly to the lines laid down by Christ. As the State became Christian, its position should not have been altered. Confining itself strictly to the spiritual sphere, expressing itself always in lowly ways, it might have remained as the inspiring soul of the body politic, taking no sides in its party strifes and contests, but influencing the more largely by the strict preservation of its lofty attitude. And that possibility still lies before it, though it has for the time been obscured by the disruption of the Church into countless sects. However disposed the State may be to listen to the voice of Christ speaking within her, it is now so confused through division that only at rare times can it be sure that it hears aright. The loss of unity, for which the Papacy is mainly responsible, is the most serious blow to the expression of the kingdom which it has received.

But in spite of the lesson which the Church ought to have learned as to the importance of keeping to the old paths, yet the social distress in Christian kingdoms has led to fresh endeavours being made to remedy it by sections of the Church allying themselves with political parties. The Roman Church still holds to its false ideal, and seeks on principle to become a political party in the State, with a propaganda of its own. The Nonconformists also, in some places, are trying the same methods, using their well-disciplined organisations for the establishment in the State of a sufficiently strong party to carry through their aims. And it is to be feared that some Anglicans are inclined to rely too much on the arm of the State for the fulfilment of Church reforms. All ostensibly are seeking the furtherance of the Kingdom of God, but yet are forgetting the lessons of the past, that political successes make no great advance for the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, as in the first days, the Kingdom of Heaven will be most clearly manifested to those who have eyes to see, by the relief of the suffering and needy, and the evangelisation of the poor. The attempt made in some places to rob the

Church of the privilege of ministering to the needs of the distressed, on the ground that she encourages a hypocritical spirit, which feigns a love of the Gospel for the sake of the loaves and fishes, is one to be steadily resisted. A Gospel, however fervently preached, that is unaccompanied by works of mercy will always be regarded with suspicion and coldness.

The Church then to-day, as in the first days, has a double duty to perform. In the first place, she has everywhere to express her confidence that the Kingdom of Heaven is in the midst; and in the second, to keep her own social principles free from the limitations of political party strife. However desperate the social conditions may be, however much they may seem to indicate the existence and power of the Kingdom of Hell rather than that of Heaven, of darkness rather than that of light, the Church, believing in the continual presence of her Head, the King of kings, believes also in the presence and activity of that well-ordered, spiritual kingdom which presses on behind Him. There is, therefore, no necessity for her to thrust herself into the combat, but merely to witness everywhere to the forces

which, beneath the outward social conditions, are making for righteousness, to release them and give them free play, and by her spiritual powers to prepare the way for the advancement of the Kingdom.

And this she does better from the height which her Lord has always taught her to occupy. It was Christ's constant relationship to His Father, His continual abiding in His presence, that gave to His words that supernatural wisdom that was so convincing to His disciples. As Professor Peabody rightly says: "It was the tranquil elevation of mind above the social issues of the day which gives to Jesus His wisdom and insight concerning them. He only truly sees things who sees round them and beyond them. Breadth of wisdom requires a large horizon of mind. The man of details is shut in by them, so that they obstruct rather than enlarge his view. The wise physician deals best with the sick man, not by being a participator in the emotion and distress involved in the single case, but by detaching himself from them and examining the single case with the tranquillity and self-control of a broader view. . . . Sometimes it

happens that the highest wisdom in affairs of the practical world is an endowment of the most unworldly men."[1] Lacordaire lost vision and influence when he came down from the mountain top and as a deputy sought to influence French politics. He lost vision because the reforms he desired were only distorted in the dust of political conflict. The Church must have her life above the tossing waves of party strife.

But, further, every conception of social reform loses directly it becomes an act of a legislative assembly; and not only loses, but quite possibly affects prejudicially interests which ought to have been more amply protected. It may be an advance, a measure of progress, but it is marred by unavoidable limitations. The Church can never, without risk, be responsible for the political direction of a great moral reform which she has pressed. It is of course obvious, a mere commonplace, to assert that she is irrevocably pledged to the cause of justice and mercy, and that whilst the social order is unjust she must seek to change it, but before she can trust herself to any par-

[1] *Jesus Christ and the Social Question*, Peabody, p. 84 ff.

ticular measures she ought to be very sure "that the new order will be more just and more merciful than the old, and that the methods proposed for abolishing the old order will at the same time provide for the secure establishment of the new." And this certainty is rare. It is hers to conceive, stimulate, and urge, but not to adapt to the current opinion of the day. Directly she enters into the arena of politics, and strives to put her great thoughts into such a shape as will pass the disputing parties of a legislative assembly and become law, she not only acquiesces in an expression of her thought which is narrow and poor, but she puts herself quickly out of date as the years roll on, leaving the legislation she accomplished at such self-sacrifice high and dry on the sands of time, with its limitations disagreeably obvious. She can never without loss sacrifice the eternal for the transitory, or the infinite to the narrow and limited. She may be accused of being unpractical, a builder of castles in the air, a preacher of impossible truths, but history will be her witness that by treading in the paths of her Master, and keeping aloof from the machinery of politics, she has effected

large reforms of incalculable benefit to the poor.

For on what do reforms depend? Less, surely, on the legislative, than on the public opinion which alone gives them vitality. As Dr. Dale said years ago: "A Christian order is impossible except to a Christian people. The arrangements proper in a college for young men would be mischievous in a school for boys. Institutions which are foreign to the spirit and character of a nation can have no real authority; they will not work. Between the political and economic order, on the one hand, and temper and moral habits of a people on the other, the relations are vital. As long as the desire of large numbers of our people is for material prosperity, a social order in harmony with the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount is impossible. Men must seek first—that is, as the supreme object of life—the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, before they can have an economic organisation of society corresponding to the spirit and law of Christ."[1]

If this is so, and who can deny it, then the evangelisation of a country is a necessary,

[1] *Fellowship with Christ*, Dale, p. 256.

and the most direct preparation for its moral progress. And it will be found, in looking back to the witness of history, that real religious revivals have always been followed by measures of political reform. The mission of the Wesleys had probably more to do with the great Reform Bill than the actual work of those engaged in it; and the Oxford movement has been unconsciously the spring of that social reform which Maurice and Kingsley did so much to foster. Directly men get a vision of an unseen order, steadily making for righteousness, and directly they seek to make room for its expression in the Church, then large possibilities arise; for the foundations of repentance and faith, on which alone the real kingdom will rest, have been securely laid. For the Church to begin otherwise, to abandon the preaching and enforcing of the great evangelical truths, to forsake the witness to an invisible kingdom of Beauty and Order, which a careful and reverent worship supplies, and to throw herself into the political movements of the time, is to attempt to sow the land before it is ploughed and prepared, or, to change the metaphor, to plaster the sore

instead of treating the condition of the constitution which produces it.

As Mrs. Browning puts it in *Aurora Leigh*—

> "It takes a soul
> To move a body: It takes a high-souled man
> To move the masses, even to a cleaner sty.
> Ah—Your Fouriers failed,
> Because not poets enough to understand
> That life develops from within."

V

But whilst the Church, like her Master, seeks to secure the reforms that are needed by seeking first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, that is, by preparing the way for it, making it possible for it to be received and appreciated, by witnessing to its grandeur and beauty, she does not confine herself to this. She endeavours to practise what she preaches. Each church, parish, and diocese seeks to express in practical shape the principles she upholds. In their way, and according to their powers, they become miniature pictures of the Kingdom of Heaven. They express, as they have opportunity, its various principles, building upon the foundation of brotherhood so

clearly laid down in the two great Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion, where all are made members of the One Christ and all partake of the one Bread and drink of the one Cup. Beginning with the Christian school, they fit the children for the various positions which life offers, and see that they are placed where the chance of moral contagion is as small as possible. Recognising that work only makes a part of life, they gather them into clubs and societies, where they may find all the advantages which wholesome recreation affords. Where misfortune has brought poverty, there help is supplied through the alms of the faithful; where age and infirmity have made work impossible, then through the Church is given such pension as may keep the honest worker in independence. So the Church, whilst freed from the responsibility involved in politics, exhibits in its own family life the social virtues she commends.

But she does more. By proclaiming in season and out of season the responsibilities of brotherhood, she emphasises the duties that fall to man whether as citizen, employer of labour, trader, landlord, or shareholder. It is not for her to

go into details as to how these duties are to be fulfilled. To every Christian man belongs "the unction from the Holy One," and he needs not that any man should tell him what to do in particular circumstances. No precepts of that kind could be universally true everywhere—they might be just in England, unjust in America. The indwelling Spirit will give a right judgment. Freedom is essential to the Christian life. It is conceivable that two Christians could conscientiously take opposite sides on a great political question, and be equally right. The opposition to a policy may be as religious as its enforcement. In any case, the Church, as the expression of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is independent of State or country, cannot possibly limit its great principles by a series of minute directions to its members as to how to vote or where to buy. Directly she does this she forgets the greatness of that Kingdom she is seeking to bring in. Nevertheless, her members learn, and where her teaching is faithful they, so far as they are inspired by her spirit, themselves adapt it to the daily needs. So the Kingdom is seen in each parish and each diocese.

It is by bearing in mind the distinction between the Church as the expression of the Kingdom of Heaven in a definite and clear form, and the State as the wide sphere for its exercise, that we avoid those misleading judgments that are constantly being made about the functions of a Christian State. The State is not the Kingdom of Heaven as the Church is, and therefore it still uses weapons the Church has put aside, *e.g.* those of force, whether that of war or imprisonment—as the means for the fulfilment of its designs. And though it is true that the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is slowly but gradually leavening the State, yet the State makes no profession of the adoption of its principles as the Church does. No scandal, for example, arises if two citizens go to law with one another over a question of property; but the sight of two Christians, *e.g.* two clergy or bishops, wrangling over the possession of a house or field would naturally excite surprise. They are members of a Kingdom which preaches as one of its principles that its citizens should rather suffer wrong than go to law before the world, that they should not resist evil, but overcome it "with the good."

On the other hand, it may be quite right in order to uphold the dignity of law and justice that some Christian oppressed by an unbeliever should seek the power of the arm of the State. We all live in two relations—one as brethren in a common family, the head of which is Christ; the other as fellow-citizens of a State, the head of which is king or president. St. Paul was in this double position. As a citizen of Rome, he resisted the threatened scourging and stood on his rights, and this more than once. As a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, he forgoes his rights and the obligations of others towards himself. He begs Philemon, who owed him everything, to grant what he might have commanded; and in all his relations towards others, he acts as a brother or father, refusing to contemplate the possibility of any other position. The Church then is designed to express everywhere the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven, and there is an expectation on the part of the world that she will do so.

But not only is she intended to show the life of the kingdom, but to raise up those who will carry it into the State. This was what

Christ did. Professor Peabody has pointed out that instead of taking the line of the reformer, and endeavouring to influence large masses of people, Christ primarily addressed Himself in His teaching to individual cases and immediate ends. And this extraordinary individualisation of teaching indicates not only His attitude towards social reforms, but also the instrument to which He was willing to trust His hope for the world. What He had to give He gave to individuals to be given again through individuals. "His way of approach to the life of His age was not by external organisation, or mass movements, or force of numbers, or in any way from without; but interior inspiration, by the quickening of individuals, by the grace of personality."

The life of the Apostolic Church ought to be repeated. Giving herself to prayers and the ministry of the Word, she should aim at inspiring and training her sons and daughters for that particular ministry to the needs of the whole Commonwealth for which it is calling. "Look ye out men of honest report and full of the Holy Ghost, whom we may set over this business," is her continual appeal. It is her business to train

reformers, and history will record that in spite of her dulness of vision, in spite of her inability to trust adequately those whom she has trained, she has not been unsuccessful. The men and women who have done most to promote needed reforms in factories and prisons, who have cared for the blind and deaf, providing them with asylums and employment, who have protected children and young girls, who have rescued the sick and suffering from neglect and ignorance, have received their new birth from her and been reckoned amongst her members. As individuals it has been possible for them to do that which the Body as a whole could not have done.

So the Kingdom of God comes in the world now, as in the time of Christ, without observation, silently and unobtrusively, everywhere pressing its divine principles on a sluggish and unspiritual humanity, but never forcing them. Those who read no history, and look at her progress as measured by their own lifetime, are amazed that she comes so slowly. But with God "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years," and as we look back to the very beginning, whether

we regard the work of the Kingdom in Israel or the surrounding peoples, in the Church or in heathen nations, we are obliged to admit that the progress has been greater than might have been expected. Whether we look at its wider field, that of humanity in general, or its more special work through the Church its special organ, there is a definite and clear advance. What then will be its future? There are some who look forward to the existence on this earth of a perfect Human Society. In that remote future, death and pain will have been conquered, sin will have been cast out, and at last the Kingdom of Heaven will have come. For the realisation of such a dream Revelation gives no hope. There is nothing to contradict the prediction of Science that either by some sudden catastrophe of our little sun and system, or by the gradual loss of that heat and energy which alone make life possible on our planet, the story of the earth will have its end. On the contrary, the Bible speaks of Christ's return to judgment, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works

that are therein shall be burned up."[1] And we are bidden to look not here, but to that other new earth which Christ is even now preparing for us,[2] as in the long ages past He prepared this for the revelation of His kingdom. And there, if we are right in interpreting an obscure passage in the Apocalypse of St. John,[3] the nations will still retain their marked characteristics, but instead of walking, as they are now more or less disposed to do, in the darkness of their own independence, they will walk in the midst of the light that falls from the heavenly city, making ever further and further progress. Even then it would seem that the distinction between Church and State, which we are tempted to ignore, will be manifested, and possibly with a separateness of which we can know nothing here. The Kingdom of Heaven may still have functions towards humanity, towards the kingdoms of the earth possibly of a restorative character. But we are wandering into speculations which, however interesting, are dim and un-

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 10. [2] St. John xiv. 2.
[3] Rev. xxi. 24, 26; xxii. 2, 3.

certain.[1] It is enough if we have realised, even superficially, the great unseen movements which are everywhere busy about us, and have learned that the Church will best help them forward, not by political activity, but by preaching with renewed fervour the Gospel of the Kingdom, and bringing its blessing home to men by ceaseless works of charity and piety.

[1] *The Apocalypse of St. John*, H. B. Swete. See note on xxii. 2, p. 296.

CHAPTER V

QUALIFICATIONS FOR ENTERING AND SEEING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

I

WE have seen, on the grounds of Scripture and not of philosophy, that the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, infinitely extensive, "crammed" with every conceivable variety of life, reaching from the smallest and weakest intelligence to that of angels, principalities, and powers, and including within its range the spirits of just men made perfect. It is "a kingdom of perfect righteousness, of perfect goodness, of perfect holiness"—its harmony and peace undisturbed by even the shadow of evil. It is compact within itself, and its various orders marshalled in absolute obedience to its King. What we never experience here is realised there, what is weak here is strong there, what is imperfect here is complete there, what is the exception here is the rule there—justice here is

partial and maimed and consciously blind; in that kingdom justice has no flaw.[1]

And though we speak of it as "there" yet we know that it is "here," in our midst more truly and evidently than ever before, constantly pressing in further and further, and by methods of gentleness and love, never force, obtaining increasing influence and power. Its chief instrument, as we have seen, is the Church, and there it concentrates all its powers, so that the Church on earth becomes, as it were, a miniature kingdom, an expression, faulty and imperfect, yet real, of the hidden invisible order which it represents. It is not of this world and "cometh not with observation," and therefore eye cannot see nor ear hear the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. They are only received by the revelation of the Spirit. If it be asked what things, we must not answer simply the wonderful blessings of the future, the glories of heaven. Heaven is already open, as we say daily in the Te Deum—open to all believers, and there is much to be seen here in

[1] *Pascal and other Sermons—The Kingdom of God.* (The whole sermon should be read as expressing the thought of these lectures.) R. W. Church.

spite of the obvious limitations of our weak human nature.

We have seen that all Nature is an expression of the kingdom, that the seers and poets, the religious thinkers and philosophers, have not been wrong in their belief that the world, and especially its beauty, is the manifestation of divine ideas more real than itself, and that Aristotle may be right in his guess, that these ideas would have been abstract and incomplete without this material embodiment. It is possible that Fechner may be right in ascribing a consciousness even to the plants and flowers, *e.g.* he asks, Does the water-lily; rocking in her triple bath of water, air, and light, relish her own beauty? But taught by the Bible we have gone further, and with the Hebrew inspired poets have given these ideas personality, and persuaded ourselves that not a star moves, not a wind blows, not a ripple stirs, without the active aid of unseen spirits whose joy it is to praise their God and justify His ways to men. Much there is to be discovered here of unswerving loyalty to law and of wonderful combinations and varieties that make up the beauty of the world.

But there is more. The "mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven," which the Church shows to her children, are far more remarkable than the mysteries which Nature shows—for here we learn and see, not simply that which stirs the emotions, but that which illuminates the intellect. Nature of itself contains no solution of the vexed problems that press on us from every side, the presence of evil with good, the destiny of human society, the slowness with which goodness wins its victories. These are difficulties about which Nature is silent but of which the Church speaks by the help that God gives her. It is in the Church too that the enlightened see the powers of the world to come already in active exercise, and learn the mystery of binding and loosing.

But this is not all. The child of the kingdom is naturally intensely interested in those wider movements of the Kingdom of Heaven that we call politics. The relation of nation to nation, country to country, and tribe to tribe, the development of the spirit of unity that has led to a United States, a United Germany, a United Italy, a Commonwealth of Australia, the reshaping of territories which loosen moral

forces that till then were buried—all these, "the signs of the times," as our Lord calls them, are of extraordinary interest to one who has familiarised himself with the thought of a mighty spiritual kingdom seeking to make itself felt and heard.

But we may well ask, Where shall we find the man with powers adequate to the task of entering into these great secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven? It is something to know that they have been perceived, and that by men of remarkably simple minds. We find the fisherman John, telling of the fall of Rome and its Empire, with an insight into its causes that Seneca might well envy; we find the Rabbi Paul, writing of the unity of the race and of the great movements and birth pangs of Nature, with a knowledge that many a modern philosopher might covet; we find simple-minded men like St. Peter or St. James entering with ease into the largest thoughts that ever occupy man's attention. Just these very things, then, which we feel that as members of the Kingdom of Heaven they ought to know, we find they did know. And their posterity have confirmed the same by preserving the books in which they

wrote their thoughts and reading them in each succeeding age with ever fresh power and meaning. They are distinguished from the poets, philosophers, and thinkers of their own day by this one fact that they know what those far in advance of them in intellectual power and training do not know; that they see below the surface, are familiar with the past, the present, and the future of man, can read his destiny, have learnt the secrets and mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. They have seen and have entered into that kingdom. And therefore our Lord is able to unite them with Himself in the words, "We speak that we do know, and we testify that we have seen."[1] And not they only, but even those who held no position in the Apostolic band, those who were ordinary members of the Christian Church, even they saw so much, looked so far within, that language failed them, and in their effort to express their emotions they spake the confused sounds of tongues. We may therefore rightly ask here, how is it that they have entered in where others have failed?

The answer is given by our Lord in four

[1] 1 St. John iii. 11.

broad statements, two addressed to a religious Rabbi seeking entrance into the Kingdom, the other two to His own disciples.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew he cannot *see* the Kingdom of God."[1]

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *enter* into the Kingdom of God."[2]

"Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise *enter* into the Kingdom of Heaven."[3]

"I say unto you, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise *enter* into into the Kingdom of Heaven."[4]

In these statements, which are prefaced with words of great solemnity—"Verily, verily," or "I say unto you,"—the Kingdom of God or Heaven is regarded as closed to all but those who satisfy certain conditions. Not every one will see it; not every one can enter into it. I need not say that such assertions would be impossible if the kingdom were a society of

[1] St. John iii. 3.
[2] St. John iii. 5.
[3] St. Matt. xviii. 3.
[4] St. Matt. v. 20.

human beings, ecclesiastical or social. We all enter the Church by baptism, we all enjoy the social privileges of an earthly kingdom without the necessity of becoming like little children, apart from or possessing a righteousness which exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. The Kingdom of Heaven in these passages cannot then refer to any earthly society. If, on the other hand, it is a spiritual society, a kingdom real though invisible, with spiritual sights and sounds of its own, we can readily understand that those who wish to enter it must be properly prepared. If the spiritual kingdoms of art, music, and letters cannot be entered by every one; if certain gifts, dispositions, and qualities are necessary for seeing the real mystery of beauty, for realising the wonderful harmonies of sound; why should we suppose that the Kingdom of Heaven, that central Kingdom of which art, music, letters, are only the outer halls, should be open to every one? Nay, is it not found that the higher we advance in the various kingdoms we are invited to enter, the larger the demand, as also, of course, the fuller the enjoyment? We are not then unprepared to meet with certain con-

ditions laid down: except a man be born, except ye turn, except your righteousness exceed, you will in no wise enter or see. But we naturally ask: What do they mean? It is that which we now look at.

II

And first, What is the meaning of this new birth? It is unfortunate that the passage has become one of the battlefields for opposing sections of the Church, because the endeavour to find our own view there has perhaps limited our conception of the whole. The historic background is familiar to us all. Nicodemus had evidently been a witness in Jerusalem of those signs which showed that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. Thinking, as all men of his time did, that it would come with outward magnificence and splendour, he desired to know something of its coming. He feels that the prophet of Nazareth knows, and yet he does not wish to compromise his position in the Sanhedrin. He comes by night. Hesitating as to how he shall frame his question, he begins with a compliment, "Rabbi, we know that Thou

art a Teacher come from God," and is met by an answer that reads his thoughts to their very depths, and proclaims his incompetence to enter or see the Kingdom of which he wished to ask. He had been doubtless familiar with the thought that any heathen seeking admission into the Kingdom of Israel must be born again, but that any spiritual counterpart to the proselyte's baptism was necessary for himself if he would enter the Kingdom of Heaven, amazed him. He had so long been accustomed to the form of baptism, that it never occurred to him that a spiritual significance lay behind it, which every would-be citizen of the Kingdom must know. And yet a little thought, as our Lord seems to suggest, ought to have taught this Master in Israel that for the realisation of every fresh kingdom we must have a fresh faculty. For the kingdom of earth, its sights and sounds and life, we have all that is necessary in our earthly faculties. We have eyes to see, ears to hear, and brains to harmonise the sights and sounds that reach us. With education we can understand much of what is shown us during the short space of life that is granted.

But for the Kingdom of Heaven these great

gifts only carry us a certain distance. Of the spiritual realities underlying the phenomena, the sharpest ear, the keenest sight, avail us nothing. "Eye doth not see—ear hath not heard."[1]

We need then another faculty, the faculty of faith, spiritual sight, intuition.

This is God's gift and is no doubt an element in that essential part of man's nature which is called the Image of God. But it needs to be awakened. For although all men have the capacity to believe, yet, as St. Paul says, "All men have not faith,"[2] and without faith we can neither see nor hear the mysteries of the kingdom. In some way the spiritual part of our nature must be quickened into life.

As the poet is born, not made; as the artist is created, not fashioned; as the musician is heaven's gift, not earth's manufacture; so the inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven must be regenerated, must be born. The dormant spiritual faculties that lie beneath his natural gifts must be stirred and quickened into life.

And this new birth is out of water and spirit, *i.e.* out of Christ, for water and spirit symbolise

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 9. [2] 2 Thes. iii. 2.

the outward and inward characteristics of that regeneration which has its root in Christ. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son hath not life." "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." Humiliating as it is to man's pride to be told that no special power of his own will suffice for entrance into the heavenly kingdom, it is nevertheless true for all life. The immersion of the natural life in Christ, its baptism into the mystic Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, has its analogy in the life of the seed. Endowed with astonishing properties and possibilities, the seed yet remains a thing of weakness, a nonentity, until it is buried in mother earth. Its possibilities lie there. Until that takes place no one can hope for flower or fruit. But once buried, great changes occur. "Sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; sown in weakness, it is raised in power."[1] Only by burial and new birth can it take its place in the vegetable kingdom, share in its glories or blessings.

So too of the human soul. It may indeed

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 43.

reach a high place in the kingdom of earth, it may be a prince, a leader, a conqueror, having its human powers well developed and sharpened, so that few can rival its efficiency for this world, and yet he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven may be greater. The accomplished linguist may be a babe in the kingdom of music, the scientist a nonentity in the kingdom of art, and the statesman and accomplished man of letters an ignoramus in the Kingdom of Heaven. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."[1] This is no arbitrary law, but one common to all kingdoms. Without a soul for music, the kingdom of sound remains closed; without a soul for art, the kingdom of beauty is unperceived; without a soul for poetry, the kingdom of letters is not revealed. Sometimes it is the case that a man has had the capacity to enter these worlds, but has not thought it worth while to do so. He has doubted whether the advantages were worth the sacrifice. Of such an one we say his soul was never awakened. He never took the trouble to get into the environments in which birth was

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

possible. He might have been a musician or artist, but business or pleasure prevented. It is useless to argue with him about the joys of music or art. He not only does not understand them, but he does not believe in them. He prefers his lower pleasures. He remains self-excluded from the kingdom that might have been his. So, too, with the baptized. Made in the image of God, regenerated in baptism, he has all the capacities for entering into and seeing the wonderful sights and sounds of the spiritual kingdom. But they need to be awakened. The faculties of sight and hearing need to be stirred. Man must co-operate with the quickening powers of his new environment. He must choose to enter, and struggle to enter, otherwise, when the time of his coming of age draws near, he may be found unable. He is like the inheritor of some vast estate who is about to receive it. There is the house of his ancestors with its beautiful picture-gallery, its fine library; there is the park with its magnificent timber, and its shaded walks through which the public count it a high privilege to be allowed to saunter once or twice a year, and yet the heir sees

nothing. He is already talking over with the agent what he can sell. The views his family so much enjoyed, the books his grandfather took such pains to buy, the pictures that were collected at such vast cost, afford him no pleasure. To live there would be imprisonment. And men see the tragedy of an heir self-excluded from his own home. The reason is not far to seek. These things never interested him. He took no pains to know them. And though his by birth, they were never his by acquisition. So, too, the spiritual heir to these vast realms of spirit life may miss seeing and entering into them. He may never be born, never rise to the greatness of his inheritance. "The image of the words used by Christ," writes Bishop Westcott, "is that of rising reborn out of the water and out of the spiritual element, so to speak, to which the water outwardly corresponds." The words are ἐξ ὑδατὸς καὶ πνεύματος, out of water and spirit, or as in the emphatic repetition, τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος, πνεῦμα ἔστι. And this resurrection implies a moral effort analogous to the effort of the child before birth. There must be a desire to enter the kingdom. Ever since he became by

baptism a member of Christ and the adopted child of God, prayers have been made that the great endowments may be used, and teaching given, that the new capacities of the soul may be awakened; and at last, generally in very tender years, the child reaches out to its Heavenly Father. Of course everything at this stage is very elementary, as it is in birth. For though birth is one of the great critical moments of life, remembered every year as it comes round, yet the best memory can recollect nothing of its circumstances. We are, it may be, told by our parents about it, but nothing we hear recalls events of that day. There was a distinction between light and darkness, a readiness to clutch the hand placed in ours, a cry for our needs to be supplied, and that was all. There were no signs of the languages we should learn, of the accomplishments we should master, of the distances we should cover with the feet as yet unable to walk. But everything potentially was there. All that was needed was a response to the efforts others should make in our behalf, a co-operation with their care for us.

These being the characteristics of birth,

it is strange that so many features belonging to the full-grown life should have been at times insisted upon. Demands have been made that conditions like those which marked St. Paul's spiritual birth should be complied with. The newly-born soul must, it is said, have a full conception of the risen Christ, a definite recollection of the hour in which his birth took place, an ability to walk in God's ways, such as characterises the full-grown Christian. But St. Paul seems to exclude his own case as being in any sense typical by speaking of it as singular and unique, "born out of due time" (ἔκτρωμα), and the other marks expected are not marks of the newly born. Birth is the simplest of all beginnings. Everything is in its rudest elements. Though the ear is perfectly formed, music makes scarcely an impression; though the eye lacks nothing of its wonderfully delicate apparatus, yet things shown to the newly born appear to be all the same; though the tongue, palate, and throat are perfectly formed, it will be long before there is any intelligible sound. The most elementary perception of spiritual things,

the very simplest faith, the barest prayer, are all marks of new birth, and wonderful possibilities are open to those who possess them. But until they are there, until the life has risen out of the darkness of its secret place where it was being secretly fashioned, the Kingdom of Heaven not only cannot be seen, but is not desired. On the other hand, so long as they are in activity there are no heights to which they cannot attain. It took St. Paul but a short thirty years, and he not only saw Christ, Angels, and Paradise, whilst in the flesh, not only ascended to "the heavenly places" from which he gained a marvellous apprehension of God's purposes, but, and this was not the least of his spiritual discoveries, saw beneath the face of the meanest slave that walked in Rome, a dignity and worth that belonged to God. So, too, wonderful opportunities lie before us if we will but use them, or rather, if we will but allow God to use us, for the work is His. As we look back on the achievements of eye, hand, or ear, how very small our part in them has been; so, too, in the development of our spiritual faculties, our part is so infinitesimally

small, that he who attained the greatest height said of it, "by the grace of God I am what I am." We cannot, by taking thought, add one cubit to our stature, nor can we even with the greatest amount of self-effort grow into the fulness of the life of the Kingdom. We can, however, cultivate the disposition favourable to growth. It is of this our Lord speaks in pointing out the second condition for entrance into the Kingdom.

III

The occasion is instructive. The disciples like Nicodemus seemed to have entertained no doubt about their admission to the Kingdom; their only discussion was as to who should be greatest in it. They seem to have supposed that this would be decided in the arbitrary fashion in which distinctions and honours are given here. Privilege or merit would set them in high places, for who were more privileged than they? It was therefore surprising for them to learn that unless they altered their whole point of view they would have no place in the Kingdom at all. "Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise

enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."[1] The necessity of childhood follows upon birth. In the spiritual sphere men would if possible escape this altogether. When they begin to feel that they have divine life, there springs up a sense of independence, a desire to be a leader and prince in the Kingdom. They forget that in the life of the spirit they are never more than what they are in God's sight, however high their thoughts may be; that privilege conveys nothing at all; that even the King Himself cannot bestow the right and left hand thrones in His glory. They forget this because of the natural desire to escape the position of dependence.

And yet even birth is not more necessary for entrance into the Kingdom than the spirit of a child. We are appalled as we think of the terrible mistakes that would be made by one who reached maturity in his physical and intellectual powers without passing through childhood. How assertive his arrogance, how unbounded his vanity and conceit, how tyrannical his behaviour towards others! Precocity, which is only a shadow of what we are con-

[1] St. Matt. xviii. 3.

sidering, is never really attractive, though it may be astonishing. It is therefore in God's compassion that physically and intellectually we reach maturity slowly, and only after years and years of dependence. We have then learned by experience our limitations, our mistakes, our weakness, and are able to take in some of the lessons life teaches us. But even this experience which we gain in ordinary life is never judged sufficient to excuse our beginning at the beginning, when we knock at the gates of some spiritual kingdom as art or music. Then we must begin again. The master who is to take us into his school insists that we must turn aside from all expectations of greatness, and just become as little children. "Lay aside all you have learnt, and begin at the very beginning." Our own views, our own methods, are not considered of any value; we must submit ourselves to the teaching of the school; bend ourselves to its laws and principles. It is only along this path that we can hope to enter the Kingdom we are seeking.

So, too, the believer who is to become a disciple unto the Kingdom of Heaven must submit himself to the instruction of the Church.

He must begin with the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. He must himself think through them. All that he has learned that is alien to their spirit, he must unlearn. They contain the principles of all that is to be known in faith, worship, and morals, and he must approach them in the spirit of a child if he would understand them.

It is this that the natural man dislikes. He wishes to make his own discoveries rather than submit himself to those that are given him; or he insists on making his own spiritual experience the measure of truth. "I accept that which finds me," he says, "for the rest I have no use." He is like the pupil in a school of art, who enjoys all that his artistic instincts sympathise with, and rejects the rest. He claims that in that way he possesses his own individuality, and prevents himself from being a mere copy. He leaves the school with the opinion that he knew all it had to teach him before he entered it. He goes off on his own course and is never heard of again. His master explains by saying that though he had ability he never would learn. He had not the spirit of a child. So there are many who began their Christian

course well, but have come to no perfection because they refused to submit themselves to the teaching of the school of the Church; they never humbly and patiently endeavoured to explore and make their own the truths of the Bible and the Creed.

And yet history shows that it is the humble and childlike spirits that have seen the great sights and heard the wonderful harmonies. In Science, men like Kepler, who confessed that all he had been able to do was to read a few thoughts of God, or Newton, who compared himself to a child picking shells on the beach; in Art, painters like Watts, whose humility was as great as his talent; in Poetry, poets like Wordsworth and Whittier, who sat at Nature's feet that they might hear her instructions. And in spiritual truth, pupils like St. John and St. Paul, like St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, like Bishop Westcott and Dean Church; these men saw, because they were to the end of their earthly lives seekers of the truth through the instruments of truth God has given us.

It is sometimes supposed that such docility and obedience hinders freedom. The truth

rather lies the other way. It is the over-assertion of our individuality that often spoils our conception of the Truth.

If we are resolved only to assimilate that with which we naturally sympathise, we accentuate the tendency of our disposition to such an extent that it dominates our thinking, and insensibly we become narrow and partial. The surprising thing has often happened that those who set out to be most broad-minded have ended in becoming most narrow-minded. In their desire to reject what they thought was limited, they have themselves become limited. The champion of freedom has become a tyrant. On the contrary, by putting ourselves to school with the whole of revealed truth we have corrected our one-sidedness, or rather developed those parts of ourselves that were small and partial, and have grown with the knowledge of the kingdom of truth we set out to discover. And our individuality has become stronger and clearer as it has become fuller. The large and full personalities that the world has seen have been developed within the Church. St. Paul and St. Peter, St. Catherine of Sienna and St. Theresa, Carlo Borromeo

and John Wesley, are typical illustrations of the kind of children the truth makes. They have given themselves wholly and undividedly to the revealed kingdom of truth and thereby have become strong and broad and yet definite as is the Truth itself. The Holy Scriptures, the Catholic Creeds as their sufficient explanation, the life of the Church in its worship and sacraments, have been to them sufficient helps.

So we, too, submitting ourselves to these, putting ourselves to school with them, by their teaching enter into the mysteries of the Kingdom. Always childlike and dependent, drinking in daily of the strong draughts of truth the Church supplies, we become easily susceptible to every impression the Kingdom seeks to make upon us. The quiet of a still autumn day, the glory of a sunset, the storm on a North Atlantic coast, the sermon of some preacher, the music of a skilled player, the picture of a great artist, the life of some saint, a change in politics, a European crisis, not only reach our consciousness but reach it as phrases of one grand harmony which the Kingdom is always expressing. On the other hand, independence, self-assertion, and over-

confidence not only prevent our hearing some of the softer parts of the music, but also that interpretation of it which He whose voice is softer than the "breath of even" is ever whispering.

And so becoming more and more childlike, we remain fresh, and keep alive what Bishop Westcott has rightly called the "ennobling faculty of wonder." We preserve that delightful sense of surprise which is one of the characteristics of childhood. We are ready for discoveries.

A very little knowledge of our Lord's method of training His disciples shows us what care He took to stir this important gift. Wonder, rather than criticism, was always being developed. His continual signs and miracles bore perpetual witness to an open heaven; His teaching about the other life and other beings made them feel how near it was. And His presence, always suggesting as it did the Father in Heaven, trained them habitually to live within the real Home. The faculty so developed and trained gave their minds that energy in concentration and attention, which thoughtful men have noted that wonder always

produces, and which the mere intellectual will cannot put forth without it. Nothing was commonplace, for all was not merely touched but bathed in the radiance of another world.

With the children of the world it is so different. Having cast aside, as unworthy of intelligent thought, the whole realm of spiritual being, and having narrowed their conceptions of God's Word to that which they can discover with their reason, they soon become tired of their perpetual limitations. They seem to get to the end of nature, of human society, of human achievement, and go off to dark séances, the circus or the theatre to get their sense of wonder stirred. The poet's wonder, that finds in a flower thoughts too deep for tears; the musician's wonder, that loses footing on earth and is carried by a succession of harmonies to heaven; the artist's wonder, that sees in the landscape or the setting sun a spirit behind the mere colouring which he longs to catch; the spiritual wonder of the writers of the Bible, who could describe the greatest wonders in the simplest language, because where all was wonderful there was the less need to direct attention to that which

was specially so: all these are to many mere idle sentiment, the effects of a fanciful imagination. They are tired and *blasé* before they reach middle age, having lost largely through their pride and arrogant self-assertion that sense of wonder with which they were endowed.

IV

Birth and dependence are essential for the Kingdom of Heaven as for all other kingdoms. They are not, however, the only necessary conditions for enlarging the spiritual vision; our Lord mentions a third: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."[1] Happily, here there is no difficulty in determining what our Lord means by "righteousness." For in the very sermon where He lays down this principle, He bids them take heed that they "do not their righteousness before men,"[2] from which it is clear that it is some outward act or acts. These outward acts are afterwards named as almsgiving,

[1] St. Matt. v. 20. [2] St. Matt. vi. 1.

prayer, and fasting. To them, we know, the Pharisees attached great importance. They were scrupulous in almsgiving, tithing even the smallest herbs; extremely careful about their prayers—what they said, and how it was said; and regularly fasted twice in the week. It is a surprise to us to learn that our righteousness must not only exceed theirs, but that, unless it does, we do not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. What has the spiritual kingdom to do with outward forms? Its freedom seems the very antithesis to formal obligation. And yet there is a strange insistence upon it in this Sermon on the Mount. Commandments, even the very least, are to be obeyed, and it is only those who see the significance of such that can really be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.[1] Our Lord speaks of even such a minute obligation as that of tithing anise, mint, and cummin with approbation, asserting that His disciples ought to imitate it, though not to the exclusion of the weightier matters of the law.

But what does it mean? How are we to explain it? If the Kingdom of Heaven were a

[1] St. Matt. v. 19.

human society, we could understand the insistence laid upon keeping its smallest rules; but if it be a spiritual kingdom, these rules seem in the way. So we think, till we remember how entrance into any and every kingdom is only along the path of rules. The beginner who wishes to escape them is told at once he will never succeed. Schools of art or music lay down with care a certain discipline, which must be followed. The disciple who seeks the kingdom of beauty must pay tireless attention to the technique of his art. Form, construction, shading, colour, proportion must be carefully learned. So, too, he who would enter the kingdom of sound. Daily practice for many hours with tiresome scales, careful study and knowledge of the alphabet of music, repeated attention to various sounds—all this must be done till the world of harmony is gained. The pupil often wearies of it, persisting that it surely cannot be necessary, but only to be reminded that unless he masters the technique he will remain outside the Kingdom.

So, too, with the Kingdom of Heaven. We are apt to think otherwise. Rules of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving may be necessary for

some people, but we can do without them. We shall pray when we are in the mood for prayer, fast when we are inclined, give alms when some appeal moves us. But we see no reason why we should regularly obey them as though they contained eternal principles. And yet a little consideration will show us that in them are enshrined the great powers that help us to know the Kingdom. Prayer is the language of heaven. And as one who is proceeding to a foreign kingdom feels that it is of prime importance that he knows its language otherwise he will never be able to understand its life, so he who is seeking entrance into the heavenly kingdom must know how to pray. And it is not so simple as we first suppose. Had it been so our Lord would not have given His disciples a form which might serve as an example of what prayer is. As an instrument of petition it is easy, but as a means for communion with God, it is difficult. And it is in this latter sense that it helps us to hear and read the unseen. As the language of a friend in France or Russia is not only a means for talking with him, but also for knowing French or Russian thought, so

prayer teaches us not only how to speak to God, but how He speaks to us. As we grow in prayer we learn what He is likely to say; we grow familiar with the indications of His mind.

It is not otherwise with fasting. It is not only a duty commended to us by our Lord's own example, but a means by which the body is rendered more susceptible to spiritual impressions. It may be true that when we have been without food for a considerable time, we are too faint to think or to realise the meaning of God's messages; but it is also true that when we have eaten freely, we are less disposed to spiritual thought. The constant control of the appetite, keeping its divine purpose ever before us, enables us to walk and move in that rare atmosphere where the mysteries of God are seen and known.

And almsgiving is that which gives us wings whereby we mount to the heavenly places, for where our treasure is there our heart will be also. We spend and are naturally interested in the objects to which we give our money. The plans of the kingdom, its advance and progress, become more attractive

to us as we become identified with them by the help we give.

We can see then why our Lord lays such stress upon those great duties, which can only be learned by method and rules.

Our obedience is our testimony to the worth of the kingdom we are seeking. Those who feel there is nothing to be seen or known beyond what our eyes and ears can teach us, will not trouble themselves with disagreeable practices because the Church orders them or Scripture commends them. But those who feel that greater than the sights of earth are the visions of heaven, and more entrancing than the sounds of earth are the harmonies of heaven, will take pains so to learn their lessons in these things that when the outer glory passes away to make way for the hidden inner beauty of that which eternally abides, they may know enough to understand something of its meaning. The great danger is that we may arrive in that wonderful world to which we are passing partially blind or deaf, if not wholly so ; that we may be so unfamiliar with the inner spiritual principles of God's Kingdom that when we see them expressed in new forms or

sounds, we may be unable to make anything out of them. Our Lord bids us with solemn earnestness, using imagery that we dare not spell out of "undying worm" and "unquenchable fire," to make any and every sacrifice, lest at the end we should be cast out of the kingdom. We dull His teaching by thinking of an external exclusion, as though the kingdom were some fair country where we were not allowed to land, but the reality is far more terrible. The unworthy are self-excluded, they are like some poor idiot whose faculties are too weak to take in what life really is, and who aimlessly wanders here and there feeling burdened with the pressure of that which he will never understand. To escape this, we must set ourselves to learn patiently, slowly, and carefully, in the ways laid down, the signs of the Kingdom here which lie all around us. It is not every one that has learnt to say "Lord, Lord," in his prayers, that will be able to enter the Kingdom, but the disciple who has learnt so to discipline his body, mind, and spirit that the will of God even here has been made plain to him.[1]

[1] St. Matt. vii. 21.

But it is to be observed that our righteousness must *exceed* the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees if we are to enter the kingdom. It is not impossible for a disciple to become a master of technique and yet remain ignorant of art and music. Some learners never get beyond technique, and this was the case with the Pharisees, and this the reason why they remained blind and never saw the Messiah in Christ, or the Kingdom of Heaven which was in their midst. Though we cannot do without the letter, we know it may kill. The form, valuable as a means, becomes bondage when used as an end. Essential as habits of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving are in order to mould and shape the Christian soul, directly they cease to do this they have the very opposite effect. They are admirable servants, but bad masters.

V

New birth, dependence, and discipline are essential conditions for the knowledge of the kingdom. Before I close, one other must be mentioned, suffering. When our Lord was asked by two of His disciples through their mother for per-

mission to sit on the right hand and on the left in the kingdom, He replied by asking whether they were able to be baptized with His baptism and to drink His cup—clearly implying that the position they sought could only be won in that way. And the Master's thought was expressed by the disciple. St. Paul explained to the persecuted Christians of Iconium why they suffered: "We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God."[1] For the King Himself only entered the kingdom through the Cross. As we say in our beautiful hymn, "When Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers." In His wonderful condescension He was "made perfect through suffering." It was not only, we may believe, that humanity through its divine Leader must make in pain and death its homage to the law of righteousness before the gates of the kingdom could be thrown back, but that the perfected humanity He took must pass through the fire before it could become glorified, and thus enabled to fulfil the great purposes of the kingdom for which it was designed. To

[1] Acts xiv. 22.

enter further into this mystery would require more space than this chapter would allow, but we must not pass it by. There is a natural inclination to-day, with which all to some extent must sympathise, to banish pain and suffering as though it were wholly evil. But so long as the Cross stands as it does as the symbol of our Christian faith, as the power by which we conquer, we can never acquiesce in that view of it. Men have learnt through pain what otherwise they could have never known. How many illustrations history offers of the truth that the spiritual kingdoms of thought, beauty, and sound have been conquered only by those who suffered. It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom, but to the poor in spirit or the persecuted the kingdom belongs.[1] Again and again this has been shown. But for Bunyan's twelve years in prison, we should never have had the *Pilgrim's Progress*; but for the loss of one very dear, Mrs. Gaskell's beautiful stories would never have been written. "We will not complain," writes Carlyle, "of Dante's miseries, for had all gone well with him as he wished, Florence would have had another

[1] St. Matt. v. 3, 10.

prosperous Lord Mayor, but the world would have lost the *Divina Commedia*." So well did the Spaniards understand this law that when they were urged to relieve the poverty of Cervantes out of the public treasury, they said, "Heaven forbid that his necessities should ever be relieved, since it is his poverty that makes the world rich."

Mozart wrote his great *Requiem* when struggling with debt, and Beethoven his greatest works when fighting against sorrow and increasing deafness. Darwin declared that had he not been so great an invalid he would not have done nearly so much work. These instances might be multiplied to any extent; they are enough to prove that suffering opens the gates of the outer realms of the Kingdom of Heaven. So, too, the Central Kingdom itself. Of this the Bible itself is the best evidence. There as nowhere else we find the very thoughts of God. And if we ask by whom they have been given to us, we find that, differing as they do in profession, in intellectual ability, in the power of expression, they are all marked in a special degree by suffering. Moses, continually harassed by the Israel he

led out of bondage; Samuel, rejected by his nation and disappointed in his king; David, persecuted by Saul and broken by Absalom's rebellion; Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, compelled to take the unpopular side in politics, and hated by their contemporaries; St. Paul, hunted from place to place as a renegade; St. John, oppressed and banished by Rome—these are only familiar instances, sufficient to remind us that the library we call the Bible was fashioned in the furnace of affliction, and that there is hardly one of its sacred pages that is not stained by tears or marked by blood. The Prophets and Lawgivers, the Apostles and Evangelists through whom the Spirit spoke to us, were men bowed down with trial, and through their sufferings were enabled to read the mind of God and to hear something of the language and thoughts of the Kingdom of Heaven.

To say that these great spiritual discoveries have been made through pain, does not explain its mystery though it soothes its bitterness. We may know that the valley of the shadow of death has led to a view of the Delectable Mountains without understanding why it was

the only approach. But whilst we may be thankful as we go through life for the gentleness of the Father's hand which spares us as much as He can, we may not be unwilling when the time comes to pass through the fire if only we may see a little more clearly and hear a little more distinctly the sights and sounds of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We live in a utilitarian age when the value of things is measured by their practical advantages. "Show me how thy dogma can make my life more useful, and I will believe it." It may be well to look a little wider. Conduct is of supreme importance. The lesson of loving neighbour as self cannot be too strongly insisted upon or too largely applied. But conduct needs its inspiration. To sacrifice self for a humanity that must one day utterly perish is a hard task. We need, as I say, to look more widely. And as with purified eyes we find a heavenly kingdom enwrapping this, as we see that the human race is only part of a larger family, as we realise the gentle, indefinable pressure of a kingdom that makes for righteousness, and with increasing vision see ever more clearly the great Leader riding upon the

white horse, Whose Name is Faithful and True, Whose Eyes are as a flame of fire, on Whose Head are many diadems, Who is arrayed in a garment sprinkled with blood, and followed by countless armies on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and pure, we are filled with a wonderful hope. The destiny of man is glorious beyond the wildest dreams, and every kind word said to help it forward, every kind deed done to increase its efficiency, is not merely doubled or quadrupled, but is made a thousandfold greater, inasmuch as it makes a fresh opening for the hosts of God to enter, a larger space for the Kingdom of God to fill, and enables us to pray with increased fervency, "May Thy kingdom come on earth as it has already come in heaven."

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